

THE WHOLE
W O R K S
OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
DUNCAN FORBES.

THE WHOLE

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OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

DUNCAN TORRES

AND HIS LORDSHIP OF THE GREAT SEAL

THE WHOLE



W O R K S

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

DUNCAN TORRES

A NEW EDITION OF HIS WORKS

ALSO

PRINTED AT THE

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

AND HIS LORDSHIP

THE WHOLE
WORKS

Robert OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE *Wilson*

DUNCAN FORBES,

LATE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COURT OF SESSION. *R*

CONTAINING,

- I. Thoughts on Religion, Natural and Revealed.
- II. Reflections on the Sources of Incredulity with regard to Religion.
- III. A Letter to a Bishop, concerning some important Discoveries in Philosophy and Theology.

TO WHICH IS AFFIXED,

A Short Account of the AUTHOR.

GLASGOW:

PRINTED BY DAVID NIVEN,

For A. M'GOUN, Bookseller and Stationer.

MDCCLXXXVIII.

W O R K S THE WHOLE

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DUNCAN FORBES,
LATE LORD TREASURER OF THE COURT OF SESSION.

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- I. Thoughts on Religion, Natural and Revealed.
- II. Reflections on the Principles of Morality, with
a Dissertation on the Nature of the Moral Sense.
- III. A Letter to the Hon. the Lord Advocate, on the
Importance of Philosophy and Theology.



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MURDOCH STREET.

M E M O I R S

OF THE

A U T H O R.

THE FORBESES in general are descended from a French family, which to this day goes by the name of *Forbin*; but though the name be from a French extract, yet those of Scotland did not immediately come from the Gallic stock, but from Ireland. For in the year 1300, a nobleman of that kingdom came into Scotland, and signalized himself by his bravery and resolution, in the cause of Robert Bruce, commonly called Robert I. who rewarded him with several lands, and dignified him with honours.

Among the several branches of this family, was one *Forbes* of *Tolqboun*, and from him descended the illustrious person the subject of these Memoirs. At what particular period the family of *Culloden* came from that of *Tolqboun*, is not very material, nor can it well be ascertained. The first of this last family was a merchant in Inverness, in the time of Oliver Cromwell, and being a man of a most extensive and enterprizing genius, he not only taught the people in these parts the use of commerce, but enriched himself, so as to buy the estate of *Culloden* which his son and grandson considerably augmented: this last was Duncan Forbes of *Culloden*, the father of the late Lord President.

Our Author was but the second son. He was sent to the school of Inverness with his elder brother John, and made such vast progress in the Latin language, as to be generally esteem'd; after this he was sent to the university, where he wonderfully improved

in the different branches of learning to which he applied. After finishing his education, he was advised to lay out his small patrimony, *viz.* 550*l.* in merchandize, for at that time he seemed to have a mercantile genius; this indeed he did, but with little success, which might be owing either to some unforeseen accidents at sea, or to the openness and generosity of his heart, which was ready on every occasion to succour the indigent, and, perhaps too inconsiderately, to lend out his goods, to people who prov'd unworthy of the trust repos'd in them; while in this station, he was insensibly led into what, with the temperate and modest, is justly look'd upon with disdain; he and his elder brother whose generosity was as extensive as his genius, obtained the designation of being the greatest bouzers, *i. e.* the most plentiful drinkers in the North.

Tho' he was not of a Highland family, nor chieftain of one of their clans, yet as he lived pretty near them, he was well acquainted with all their customs; no man ever treated them with more chearfulness and affability than he; and no person looked with more contempt and pity upon habits that had a tendency either to enervate the mind, or to fill it with a spirit of revenge; he set an example of moderation and prudence to all his acquaintance, though sometimes, by the vivacity and sprightliness of his genius, he fell into almost more than the innocent amusements of life.

As his friends observed the depth of his understanding and discerning judgment, they advised him to apply to the study of the law, and this he did with such surprizing success, as to commence advocate in the 23d year of his age, *anno* 1708; and it was not long, till he made a considerable figure at the bar.

In 1715, his elder brother with all his tenants in Ferntosh, joined the other loyal clans, such as the

Munroes, M'Kays, Sutherlands and Frasers; his house was the very receptacle of the chieftains while besieging Inverness, which town was obtained by means of the timely intelligence that he had procured. He was in a manner every where; so zealous was he for the service and interest of his country, that he slept but little; he was in perpetual motion; he had a vast knowledge and understanding of the constitution; by his address and clear reasoning, he persuaded many from taking arms, that were otherwise inclined to the cause, and by his advice and example, he prevailed upon others to bestir themselves in favour of the government. His reasoning had such effect upon Lord Lovat, as to make him join in the cause of the government, notwithstanding his engagements with the Pretender, and even with the court of Versailles. In a word, he did the most faithful and substantial services at that time, but great as they were, yet no way to be compared with what, upon a like occasion, he afterward performed.

The Duke of Argyle, who at that time was lieutenant-general of his majesty's forces in Scotland, was so well convinced of his unfeigned zeal, that he treated him with peculiar marks of affection and esteem, and observing his rare abilities, he proffered to him the management of his estate in Scotland; this Mr. Forbes readily accepted, but declined taking any pension or reward, though he might have made 600*l.* yearly by it; he told his grace, that he was entirely devoted to his interest, that with pleasure he accepted the task of managing his affairs, upon this consideration, that he would give him his countenance, and treat him as a friend. The Duke, observing so generous a turn, embraced his terms, and laid hold of every opportunity of promoting his interest. *

* He was married to a daughter of Hugh Rose of Kilravock.

In the year 1722, an election was controverted betwixt him and Alexander Gordon of Ardoch; Mr. Gordon was returned, and though he was reckoned the court man, as some phrase it, and had his brother's interest to support him, yet upon a reclaiming petition, he was turned out of the house, and Mr. Forbes declared duly elected: from this time, as he had always before, he made the most splendid appearance at the bar, not so much by the gaiety of his dress, as by the strength of his reasoning and persuasive eloquence; which at once procured him the approbation of the bench, and rendered him the astonishment of the bar.

In the year 1725, he became Lord Advocate: in this station he acted with so much candour as to adorn his profession; he behaved with a fidelity becoming the most loyal subject, and with a sweetness and compassion worthy a chief and principal servant of so mild a King: No man was more willing than he to bring villany to light, and none so ready to protect and defend the innocent.

He set himself to the study of the Hebrew language, and consequently of the sacred scriptures; he assiduously pored upon that sacred tongue, and during the vacation, shut himself up in a retired place about two miles to the westward of Inverness, denying himself every gratification that in the least might interrupt his progress; he quickly saw a beauty and comeliness in the divine records, that is not to be traced out by men of a narrow understanding; he soon became the greatest proficient of his time, and even read the Hebrew Bible no less than eight times over.

He became a champion for Christianity, and wrote in its defence against Tindal, with so much strength of reason and clearness of argument, as effectually to confute the vile and ridiculous sophistry of that

unaccountable and infamous author. He studied much the doctrines of the Christian religion; and did not all at once, like some unaccountable smatterers, who are scarce acquainted with the very first principles of learning, sit these before the bar of an ill informed judgment, and dismiss them with blasphemous and impious decisions; the method of this great man was widely different, he tried them by a strict examination, by a cool, rational, and impartial enquiry, and reconciled them to his reason; and, not contented with a profession of religion, he reduced its precepts into practice, by living an exemplary life, and encouraging virtue every where.

The uprightness and integrity of his heart, with his pathetic and learned discourses, were soon taken notice of in the House of Commons; there were few members who did not court his acquaintance, and his easy access soon endeared him to them. Their admiration he likewise procured, and soon became personally acquainted with those of genius and taste, among the nobles; yea, the foreign Ambassadors were charm'd with his address, and talked freely to him in Latin, a language which he thoroughly understood.

He was employ'd in many causes, and always behaved with a zeal for his client, becoming the trust reposed in him. His business at London soon became more beneficial to him, than that for which, at Edinburgh, he was principally design'd; and in cases of difficulty he was consulted even by the lawyers themselves; he sometimes appeared for pannels before the criminal court, as in the case of Francis Charters of Amsfield. This person being a gentleman of a very lewd life, was brought into a snare; he was prosecuted by a woman commonly looked upon as a prostitute, and even accused of a rape; Mr. Forbes made so grand an appearance for him, as even to

obtain the love and admiration of the audience, which was very grand, as several noblemen appeared at the trial; yet notwithstanding the utmost efforts, eloquence itself was not a match for facts evidently prov'd; Mr. Charters was condemned to die, and the officers seized his effects. Yet after this, he was pardon'd by sollicitation of those who had interest at court; and Mr. Forbes's influence truly was great; and so conscious was he of the strenuous and noble part that the Lord Advocate had acted, that he even offered him his purse; which he as generously refused, considering that above 6000*l.* in specie had been seiz'd from him, just after the sentence of death was past; then says Colonel Charters, since you will not take my money, I will make you as handsome a present, and it is this; I understand that your estate lies a hundred or more miles from Edinburgh, and as you have great business there, a country house near that city, perhaps, will not be disagreeable; and as I have such and some parks at Stonie-hill, within four miles of it, I make you a present of them for your life, and desire that afterward they may return to me and mine heirs, which was accordingly done.

In the year 1735, he became heir to the estate of Culloden, by the decease of his elder brother; but this addition to his fortune was no way equal to the sorrow which he felt from the loss of his brother.

In the year 1736, two smugglers, Andrew Wilson and George Robertson, were condemned to be executed, for breaking open a custom house in Fife, and robbing Collector Stark of the King's money. They being brought to church, as it was customary then for criminals, Robertson, by the aid of Wilson, escaped, but Wilson was executed upon the day appointed. When the hangman was mounting the ladder to cut down the corps, some person threw a small clod, and hit him upon the nose, so that it bled;

upon which some guns were discharged by a captain Porteous and his command; the shot was not without execution; for about a dozen were killed upon the spot, and several wounded.

As Porteous returned from the execution, he was sent for to the council chamber; the city was in an uproar, the populace loudly cried out for satisfaction; some had lost their children, some their husbands, and some their parents; he was confined to the tolbooth. He was tried before the Justiciary, where he was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. Queen Caroline, being then guardian of the realm in the King's absence, gave him a reprieve; but on the night before the execution, betwixt nine and ten o'clock, a mob arose, entered the city guard, seized upon the ports of the town, burnt the door of the prison, and about twelve at night, brought Porteous out, in his night gown, and hanged him on a dyer's pole.

When the parliament sat, it was moved, to bring up the magistrates of Edinburgh to their bar, and to try them for the riot committed in that part, of the King's dominions, of which they had the charge; accordingly they were brought up, and examined in the House of Lords; the provost was declared incapable, the city of Edinburgh was deprived of her gates, and the town guard, which she honourably maintained. On this occasion Mr. Forbes (being then Lord Advocate) by his spirited behaviour, acquired the most distinguished honours both to himself and his country: * he shew'd to demonstration,

* It is said, several Lords of Justiciary were also summoned before the house of Peers, one of whom being interrogated what kind of shot the guards used at the execution of Wilson; he answered, *It was SLUG*. Being asked what that was; he replied, *It is a kind of shot used in Scotland for killing fools [fowls] and dukes [ducks]* which raised a loud laugh at his expence — Mr. Forbes, then

how contrary it was to the articles of the Union, to the good of the nation in general, and of the city of Edinburgh in particular; he pointed out the injustice of punishing a whole city for the sake of some unknown offenders, who, out of malice to the place, or in order to raise an insurrection against the government, might have come from London, from Dublin, from Versailles, or even from Rome herself. He concluded one of his speeches thus; " Shall then the
 " metropolis of Scotland, the residence of such an
 " illustrious race of Kings, who made it their greatest
 " glory to dignify this noble city, shall such a
 " place as this, I say, be stript of her most valuable
 " privileges, her guards and gates, for the sake of
 " some unknown offenders, and a Scotchman calmly
 " behold the havock. I glory, my Lords, to withstand
 " so rigorous a procedure, and judge it my
 " greatest honour, to stand up in defence of my native
 " country, when the same is exposed to loss and
 " infamy." The lively representations of Mr. Forbes, who overturned every argument that was us'd against the city, prevailed almost upon the whole.

No sooner did he produce his commission in July 1737, for being President, than he was received with a pleasure that was visible in every face; for his name was universally known, and such as knew him personally, did not think they had heard the half of his reputation; he was, in the usual manner, sworn to do justice without respect of persons; and after that formality, he voluntarily bound himself most solemnly with a second oath, that he would do so; and how well he observ'd his vows, is known to all who heard him. The faculty of advocates waited on him with

replied, " My Lords, We acted, in that affair, as our consciences directed us; and there is no power on earth that dare call our actions in question." Which spirited answer put an end to the examination.

their address, and testified their great satisfaction with his advancement, and thanked him for the prudent, the wise and judicious discharge of the trust that had hitherto been reposed in him by his royal master: in a word, so great was the opinion of all ranks about him, that they conceived a thorough change of affairs was hastening, with respect to the Court of Session; and indeed their judgment was so far right, for a change happened, but the same was not so great in their thoughts, as in fact it afterwards appeared.

He got an Act of Sederunt passed, that no cause should continue above four years before the Parliament House; and made many other wholesome acts for the good of the subjects; he preserved the greatest decorum upon the bench, and by his single authority, obliged a quorum to sit till he had signed the whole decisions. He had frequently observed the cunning and falshood of petty-foggers, messengers, and hackney-writers; when any of these had come before him, and were found guilty of imposing upon their employers, he appeared in a particular manner severe; for though no man made greater allowances for human frailties than he, yet, villany never had shelter with him; he loved his friends, but never beyond the proportion of their merit; nor did he ever prefer them, but to the places they were capable of. A number of causes that had been depending for twelve, twenty, or twenty-four years, were discussed in the very first session after he sat; he discovered the most generous disposition that ever centered in the breast of a man.

He studied the temper of the Advocates at the bar, and treated them in a manner suitable thereto; no man was ever more complaisant, more tender and encouraging to young gentlemen of a modest behaviour than he; for with the compassion of a father would he treat them in court; whereas those of a

proud and passionate turn of mind, he was ready to keep low, and when he observed them alter to the better, then would he prompt them to persevere in the tract they had begun.

Time would fail me to represent his actions on the bench, never man was a greater distinguisher of merit, or rewarded it more amply. He was a friend to some, a benefactor to many, a well-wisher to all, and an enemy to none; so mild and affable in discourse, that none could resist his persuasion: he encouraged the Lords to do justice, and if he observed any bias in them proceeding from the face of a great man, he would say, by God's grace, I shall give my thoughts sincerely, and your Lordships will judge in this matter as you will be answerable to God. When he spoke there was a profound silence, the Lawyers and Lords put themselves in a listening posture; and here I must apply to him a character from a book [Job] which he greatly admired. *When he went out to the gate; through the city, when he prepared his seat in the street; the young men saw him and hid themselves; and the aged arose and stood up; the princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth; the nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard him, then it blessed him; and when the eye saw him it gave witness to him; because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless and him that had none to help him; the blessing of the man that was ready to perish came upon him; and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy; he put on righteousness and it cloathed him; his judgment was as a robe and a diadem. He was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. He was a father to the poor, and the cause which he knew not he searched out.*

But though he preferred the public to every private interest, yet he set his leisure hours apart, either for taking such diversions as contributed to the found-

ness of his body and support of his animal constitution, or for conversing with learned men, to encourage and countenance them in the performance of their duty, and for refreshing his memory, by talking with them upon the branches of their several professions. During the time of the summer session at Edinburgh, he went out every Saturday to Stoniehill, took only one gentleman with him, and thus, except the time he devoted to hearing sermon, tasted the pleasures of a country life till the Monday.

At the breaking out of the rebellion in 1745, he applied himself to nip it in the bud; he sent for the chieftains, successively, and entertained them with a surprising and insinuating air; he delighted them with his conversation, and persuaded them with his eloquence; and was the happy instrument of keeping above two thousand of them from joining the standard of the Chevalier.

June 1746, He came to Edinburgh, and from thence went to London, where he was introduced to his Majesty, received in the most gracious manner, and thanked by his royal Master for the services which he did.* He repaired to Edinburgh in time of the Session, where soon falling ill, he died of a decay, upon the 12th of December 1747, in the sixty-third year of his age, exchanging the transitory enjoyments of this world, for others of a more refined nature.

* Another account says, That though he had nearly ruined his private fortune in the service of Government, he was received with indifference, and treated rather disrespectfully. His Majesty is said to have asked him "If it was true that a party of the *Duke's* army had killed certain supposed rebels, who had fled for safety into the court of Culloden House." He replied, "I wish I could say NO." This put an end to his favour at court!

*The following Character of Lord President FORBES,
is published in the SCOTS MAGAZINE, for 1747.*

“ **I**N the beginning of his days he was bred up in a family remarkable for hospitality; which led him, perhaps, to a free indulgence of those passions, which draw off the mind from severer studies, to more social pleasures.—His natural inclination led him to the army; but, as he early discovered a superior genius, by the advice of his friends he applied himself to letters, in which he made a very considerable progress, and particularly to the study of the civil law, which his ambition pointed out as the best way to raise the fortune of a second brother, and support the credit and reputation of his family.—Fired with a desire to excel, he soon found encouragement at the bar; where he never prostituted that masculine and persuasive eloquence, of which he was so great a master, to promote a bad cause.—Even in the early part of his life he laid down a very uncommon principle, a generous contempt of money; which he looked upon only as the means of forming an after character.—In this way he so soon distinguished himself, that he was advanced to be the King’s Advocate, after he had been unanimously elected a member of parliament; both which he discharged with so great honour and fidelity, without meanly stooping beneath his office, or venally betraying his trust, as to merit the countenance of his master, and the thanks of his constituents.—As he advanced in years, so in usefulness. His great capacity and untainted character were the sole reasons of his extraordinary advancement to the President’s chair, which he filled so well, as to render it extremely difficult for any one to sit in it after him.—The most candid honesty, the strictest integrity, the nicest discernment, the most ardent

desire of justice, adorned every part of his administration; insomuch that the decisions of the Court of Session will afterwards have a weight and authority proportioned to the character of him who presided.—No man ever made greater allowances for human infirmities; but, in the number of these, he did not reckon falshood and knavery, to which he never gave any quarter.—When he was advanced to the chair, you saw at once the dignity of the man, the noble independency of the judge, a constancy and uniformity in the pursuit of truth, a manly fortitude and intrepidity of soul, superior to the frowns of fortune, or the influence of false shame. In opposition, perhaps, to former habits, he restrained himself, when acting in that high capacity, within the most regular bounds, and gratified no pleasures inconsistent with his character as a judge.—He had, no doubt, a mixture of imperfection, in common with the rest of mankind. Conscious of his merit, he was pleased with popular applause; but never servilely courted it. He was susceptible too of flattery, but never did either one or other divert him from the paths of virtue and integrity.—He was possessed with a truly public spirit, and a most disinterested love of his country.—In 1745, as well as in the year 1715, he acted a noble and consistent part. He beheld, with indignation, the mad attempt of the enemies of our happy constitution, whom he strenuously and successfully opposed; but with his wonted humanity, and the strictest regard to the laws of his country, both during the time, and when the danger was over.—He not only defended our liberties by his sword, but our religion by his pen.—He was well versed (a rare accomplishment now-a-days) in the original language of the holy scriptures; and as he had a soul above low superstition, so he was impressed with the firmest belief of a Supreme Being, and the truth of the

Christian religion.—He could reason or rally, be grave or pleasant with equal success; and make himself extremely agreeable to all sorts of people, without deviating in the least from his native candor and integrity.—During the stated times of public business, he gave the most regular attendance; and even in the vacation, when his tender constitution required some ease and relaxation, he was constantly, and with unwearied diligence, employed in encouraging industry, trade and manufactures, and in promoting, every possible way, the real interest and good of his country.—He was remarkably generous: often distressed himself to serve his friends; and courted secret opportunities of surprising men into happiness, without the least shew or affectation of vanity.—How often does the want of this virtue throw a shade over otherwise very shining characters!—He always valued his honour as his life.—He was a tender husband, an affectionate father, a firm and trusty friend; and, in short, possessed with every other virtue which adorns the human heart in this imperfect state.—After a life sacred to virtue and honour, after he had lived long enough for himself, though not for his country, he has left us, regretted by all who knew him, by all who are capable of judging of such a character, by all the true friends of religion and liberty.”

The following Sketch of the AUTHOR's Character is taken from the EDIN. MAGAZINE, for 1773.

THE splendor of genius, and the variety of knowledge, which distinguished this eminent man, would have conducted him to greatness in any profession. In that of the law, he advanced with a rapidity, to which the greatest abilities can only enti-

gle, when they are joined, as they were in him, with the most inflexible honour, and the purest integrity. While yet a barrister, he made it a maxim never to prostitute his talents in an unjust litigation; and, as he always spoke, of consequence, in defence of what he deemed to be virtuous and honourable, the torrent of his eloquence rolled on with a force that was the more irresistible.

Quickness of discernment, solidity of understanding, an ardent love of justice, and a patient and polite attention to the pleadings of counsel, characterized him as a judge. As a citizen, he was animated with a public spirit that employed him with an unwearied zeal in the encouragement of industry, trade, and manufactures. As a man, he was open, candid, and generous.

During turbulent and unhappy times, when prerogative and freedom contended for the superiority, he conducted himself with a determined firmness to the trust reposed in him; but, at the same time, with a prudence and a moderation, that conciliated to him the affections of both parties. So delicately skilful was his conduct, that not a whisper was heard to his prejudice, at a period, when the passions of men were wound up to a pitch of the highest violence; and, when they had subsided into a calm, not a single example appeared, from which it could be so much as suspected that he had abused his power.

The glory and renown he acquired in advancing the prosperity of his country, and in contributing to re-establish peace and order, were the only reward of his services. He had even impaired, and almost ruined, his private fortune in the cause of the public; but government pressed upon him no blushing honours. The minister, with a meanness for which it is difficult to account, desired to have a state of his disbursements. The patriot was shocked at the rude-

nests of this treatment, and disdained to give any reply.

Throughout the whole course of his life, he had a lively sense of religion, without the least taint of superstition. His charity was extended to every sect and to every denomination of religionists. He nowise resembled those unhallowed and hypocritical men, who, querulous and austere in public, make a show of an affected sanctity, which they conveniently lay aside in their private moments; and which, perchance, they have only adopted to give a more poignant zest to selfish pastimes, and to criminal enjoyments.

In the intervals of business and of the duties of social life, he even employed his pen on the most serious and devout topics. He has written with real erudition, and signal judgment, and in a style flowing and oratorical, concerning religion, natural and revealed; concerning some important discoveries in philosophy and theology; and concerning the sources of incredulity. These tracts will continue to illustrate his name, while religion and literature have any value among men.

S O M E
T H O U G H T S
C O N C E R N I N G
R E L I G I O N, &c.

IT is impossible to view the immensity, the variety, the harmony, and the beauty of the universe, without concluding it to be the workmanship of a Being infinitely powerful, wise, and good.

It is impossible to examine the structure of the most inconsiderable plant or animal, without being surpris'd with such admirable contrivance, as pronounces the Author infinitely intelligent, and excludes all suspicion that it owed its origin to blind chance.

The vegetable world is adjusted with such amazing skill, that each plant, perfect in its own kind, is supported, and propagated, mechanically, by the unerring action of the sun, the air, and the earth where it grows: its seeds, by that mechanism, produce new plants of the same kind; and the herb, that perishes with the season, clothes the fields with the same livery against the next. That brute matter, inert, and insensible, should be framed so as to perform such wonders, shews wisdom, and power, far beyond the comprehension of the most perfect man.

The action of the material powers, in this system, upon the organized body of a plant, preserves, and propagates it: its roots shoot out into the soil where

it grows; there it finds abundant aliment for perfecting its trunk, and preparing its seeds; and those seeds are dropped where they meet the like encouragement. But it is not so with animals: the most perfect of the kind, left to the direction of material and mechanical powers only, must perish without rearing any succession.

Vegetables and animals are so far similar, that both require constant supplies of fresh juices; but in this they differ, that nature mechanically reaches to the one the supply it wants, whereas the other must, by some act of its own, find, and fetch it: and therefore, in animals, besides matter and mechanism, there is an active principle; somewhat, of which we have no conception or knowledge but by its effects, that finds, prepares, and takes in proper nourishment, and determines to the propagation and preservation of its own species.

By what sort of mechanism this principle acts on, or is affected by, the mere matter to which it is joined, we cannot at all conceive; but this we see, that it calls all the brute animal creation to those acts that are necessary for self-preservation, and propagating the species: each class of animals is highly industrious to compass these ends; and, if we may judge by what we feel transacting in the brute part of ourselves, there is in them a strong desire to do those acts that are necessary for the support of themselves, and a very sensible pleasure attending the gratification of that desire.

It does not appear to us that plants are sensible of pleasure or pain; whereas animals, we know, are affected by both. To a plant it is indifferent whether it is supported or not; but to an animal it is not so: it tastes felicity in receiving the necessary supplies, and languishes under want: the pleasure it receives in feeding, is the motive to look for food, and it is bribed to support itself by the happiness it meets with

in taking in its nourishment. What the plant does necessarily, the animal does from choice, and is highly rewarded, by the pleasure it receives for every act of its duty in preserving itself, and propagating.

Who can give attention to this œconomy, and at the same time reflect on the profuse supply that nature every where affords, for the support of the infinite numbers of animals, of different kinds, that swarm upon this globe, without concluding, that overflowing goodness and benevolence is an attribute of the infinitely wise, and powerful Author of nature?

In looking over the whole animal creation, one sees infinite variety of instincts, and talents, some approaching nearer, some more remote from, those dispositions that are to be met with in man, but all tending to the preservation of the creature possessed of them; but it does not appear to us, that the sagacity, or discerning, of the brute goes any further than to its own immediate preservation, and promoting what its instinct leads it to: in this consists the brute's felicity; it seems to be the measure of its understanding, from which it never swerves.

When man turns his eyes inwards upon himself, he sees in himself the brute in great perfection; similar calls to preserve life, and to propagate the species, and similar gratifications for obeying those calls; but then he feels somewhat in himself more noble; somewhat that distinguishes him from all the rest of the animal creation, that falls within his knowledge: he is conscious of reflection; he can complicate ideas, and compare them together; he can discover the relations of things; he can perceive the beauty, the order, the harmony of the creation; he can, in the creatures, see the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Creator; he finds in himself an insatiable thirst for somewhat that has no connection with the body,

after knowledge; a strong desire to contemplate, a disposition to admire, and to imitate perfection; a natural propensity to gratitude, and thankfulness for favours; and, when he carries his thoughts to the fountain of all wisdom, power, and goodness, the Author of the creation, a fulness of heart that breaks out in gladness and adoration.

When man considers that he alone, of all the animal creation, has got eyes to see the beauty and excellency of the universe; that he alone has got an understanding to discover the perfection of the Creator in his works; that he alone has got a soul fitted to admire, to adore, and to rejoice in the goodness and perfection of his Maker; talents unnecessary for preserving his life, or propagating the species, but talents that qualify him for enjoying a much more permanent and exalted kind of felicity than the other animals seem capable of relishing: can he doubt that those eyes, this understanding, and that disposition of mind, were given him to fit him for seeing, admiring, and adoring the fountain of all goodness and being? can he question that the doing so is indispensibly his duty, as it would be his felicity? and can he imagine he answers the end of his creation, if, neglecting this care of those talents, he give himself wholly up to pursue those pleasures that are common to him with the brutes?

The brutal appetites, and enjoyments, are nicely proportioned to their ends, the preservation and propagation of the animal: the appetites call regularly for what is necessary, and are fierce in proportion as the want is great; when the want is supplied, the desire ceases; excess satiates, palls the appetite, and disorders the machine.

It is not so with the mental pursuits, and pleasures: the mind is absolutely insatiable; the more it knows,

the keener it thirsts after knowledge ; its desires are endless, and the object infinite.

Besides the power of thinking, man has the faculty of communicating by speech, and recording his thoughts. The observation of each individual, and within the compass of a short life, could not go very far in science ; but we are so made, that each may be helped by the discoveries of each other ; the desire of communicating knowledge is almost as strong as the desire to know ; and, as the end of the capacity to know, is, manifestly, to discover the excellency of the Creator in his works, that the man may be filled with admiration, and acknowledgment, it is impossible to doubt that the end of the faculty of speech is to express, and communicate to each other, what we severally discover, to enlarge our ideas of the divine perfections, and to join in expressions of acknowledgment, and praise.

It is not so with the brute ; that is made to shew, and not to know, the excellency of the Creator.

One difference there is, highly remarkable, between the mere animal and the rational creature : nature produces, spontaneous, all that is necessary for the brute ; whereas some art, besides industry, is necessary to make what nature furnishes useful, and comfortable, to man. The brute is clothed by nature ; the earth uncultivated produces the herb, the seed, the berry that is fit for its nutriment ; raw meat suits the stomach of the carnivorous, nor is there any occasion for cookery, or dress. But it is otherwise with man : though nature furnish abundantly the materials, yet skill, and industry, is necessary to fit them for his use. By much the greatest part of the globe would be uninhabited, if industry did not furnish clothing ; grains must be raised ; the juice of grapes and fruits must be fermented, and meat must be prepared for the stomach before man can make use of it.

Because nature furnishes abundantly for all the occasions of the brute, they are each independent of the other, without connection, or society; except in a few instances where instinct calls them to it, because it is, in those instances, necessary for the preservation or propagation of the species.

But because men have occasion for the labour, the skill, the talents of each other, they are naturally social, and dependent on each other; they are fitted to promote the interests of each other. The soul is so made, as to reap satisfaction from acts of beneficence, to feel concern from the sufferings of its fellow-creatures, and to be knit in bonds of friendship and alliance with such as entertain the same sentiments.

Thus nature has made men fit for society, as it has made society necessary for them; but the end of making society necessary for men, leads to a further consideration. No one can think that the infinitely Wise, and Powerful, could not have so framed men, that nature, alone, and unaided, should have supplied all their wants; but, if he had done so, solitude must have been the inclination of the rational creature, and no more of the perfection of the Creator would have been known, or celebrated, than what fell within the observation of each individual. But, as essential Wisdom has disposed man necessarily for society, has provided them with proper faculties to communicate to each other their observations and their sentiments, and has furnished them with inclinations to make such communications, and to join in acts of acknowledgment and praise; it cannot be doubted that the chief, the high, and honourable end of fitting men for society, was to advance and propagate the knowledge of nature, and of the Author of it, and to promote and perfect that exercise of the soul for which it was given to man,

When man surveys his own species, framed for the contemplation of the works of God; fitted for admiring and adoring the author and supporter; so contrived as to aid each other in that great design, and to contribute to one another's happiness, not only in that, but in the common enjoyments of the animal life; he cannot help considering each individual as the immediate servant of the Creator; he cannot dispense with observing the close relation, and connection, between the whole, and the necessary dependence each has on the other.

And, when he recollects what pleasure results to the soul from consciousness of beneficent and merciful acts, what horror arises from the thoughts of cruelty and injustice, he must needs see his duty towards his fellow-servants, and with thankfulness acknowledge the goodness of the Creator, who has annexed immediate pleasure to each act of duty, and joined horror to transgression.

View then man in his perfect state, as, from the ruins still remaining, we certainly know he must have been, Blessed with all the enjoyments that give relish to the animal life; Distinguished from the rest of the visible creation, by that intelligent principle that enables him to see the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of the Author of nature in his works; Chosen to be a witness to the boundless perfections of the Eternal; Possessed of an insatiable desire of knowledge, and fresh discoveries pouring in upon him, without ceasing; Qualified to admire, to praise, and to adore, and perpetual occasions offering themselves for those rapturous exercises; Placed in society, with companions fitted for the like enjoyments, and so made as to promote his felicity, under ties of duty to them, but duty the performance whereof was necessarily to be rewarded with pleasure; Conscious of the favour of his infinitely powerful and beneficent Crea-

tor, and therefore blessed in the exercise of perpetual thankfulness: View man, I say, in this light, and say whether imagination can suggest to itself a state of higher felicity, or conceive how man came by choice, and of his own free-will, to relinquish it?

Such was man! but view him in his present condition, and you see a creature still possessed of all those qualities that fitted him for seeing and enjoying the chief good, with supreme delight; but you see those talents monstrously and mischievously employed: those eyes, and that understanding, that were given to perceive with transport the perfections of the Creator in his works, are now no more employed in that glorious service; the heart, and the desire, that panted after, and rejoiced in, the favour and protection of the fountain of goodness, have ceased to act upon that object; all the mental powers, all the springs of the heart, are still at work in search of felicity; but they seek for it where no real good is to be found, and contribute to the real misery of unfortunate man. The sovereign good neglected, all those talents, that were given for discovering and enjoying it, are turned to the improvement of those pleasures that man has in common with the brutes. The skill and industry of that intelligent creature, are occupied in pursuing the gratifications of the brutal appetites; and, in so doing, weaken and disable even those appetites from answering their real uses; or are employed in finding, and laying up means for such beastly gratifications. In the place of social affection and benevolence to mankind, malice, envy, fraud, rapine, murder prevail; in the place of God, love chuses self for its object. Knowledge, if looked after, is sought to gratify a vain, an useless curiosity, but not to lead to the source of knowledge, and life; in short, rebel to God, man sets up the vilest of his creatures in his room, and employs those faculties that were given for

the service and enjoyment of the Eternal, in pursuits infinitely dishonourable, and offensive.

In this distressed, this frightful condition, human nature can hardly bear looking in upon itself: the crime, as well as the folly, is so monstrous, that serious reflection on it must sour all the silly enjoyments that men amuse themselves with, and create apprehensions which, without some foundation for hopes, would be absolutely intolerable; and therefore mankind, to avoid reflections so very disagreeable, suffer the active principle, intended to lead to God, to carry them away from one brutish pursuit to another: if any beam of light, darting in upon their soul, should shew them their duty, they shut it out, because it points out the forfeit; and, because the amazing long-suffering and patience of the Deity, delays deserved punishment, unhappy mortals are ready to harden themselves into a belief that there is no God to be offended at their treason, or to flatter themselves with hopes, that, as they live like brutes, they shall die like brutes, and, by ceasing to be, escape vengeance.

Such is the depraved state of wretched mankind! and such the perverse turn of those whose minds are so debauched with brutal pleasures, as to like the beastly state in which they are. But they, in whom the image of God is not altogether defaced, who entertain honourable notions of the supreme Goodness, who see with wonder the long-suffering and forbearance of the infinitely Just, and who cannot conceive, that Essential Justice could dispense with vengeance for a moment, if some consideration of infinite value did not interpose, are willing to entertain hopes that some ransom may have been found for the offence of mankind, some expedient provided, by the wisdom and goodness of God, for obliterating their crimes, and restoring them to the favour and protection of the

Eternal; and to have those hopes confirmed, and improved into a well-grounded and certain belief, is the chief object of their wishes, as it would be the only solid foundation of their happiness.

Whoever has the faintest glimpse of such hopes, if he acts rationally, will not cease enquiring, with the utmost earnestness and accuracy, till he discover whether there is any just foundation for them, or no; he will consult nature, he will examine authorities, and will be equally solicitous not to admit insufficient, as he will be not to reject sufficient evidence.

In such an inquiry, beginning with the natural light still remaining unextinguished, and carefully separating what does, from what does not flow from it; examining the notions commonly received about the Deity, and comparing them with the dictates of reason, many propositions will appear demonstratively true. For example:

1. That the Deity is infinitely powerful, good, and intelligent, is deducible from nature.

2. That the Deity is merciful, so as to pardon sin, and to be reconcileable to sinners, is not deducible from nature.

3. That the Deity is possessed of qualities like to those in the soul of man, such as love, anger, compassion, is not deducible from nature.

4. That there is a plurality of Persons in the Deity, is not deducible from nature.

5. That man's sin, upon atonement, is to be pardoned, and he reconciled to the Deity, is not deducible from nature.

6. That the sufferings of a man, to whom one of the Persons of the Deity was to be joined, was to be that atonement, is not deducible from nature.

7. That the effect of this atonement and reconciliation, was to give all mankind a right to approach,

and rely on the protection and beneficence of a placated Deity, is not deducible from nature.

8. That the Deity, thus appeased, is delighted with prayers and praises, is not deducible from nature.

9. That there is a correspondence between the souls of men and the Deity, is not deducible from nature.

10. That the prayers of men are acceptable to the Deity, heard, and answered, through the intercession of that Person whose sufferings atoned for sin, is not deducible from nature.

If then these things concerning the Deity, and man's state, are true, and of absolute necessity to be known to man, for his comfort, and towards enabling him to perform any acceptable duty to his Creator, his knowledge must come by revelation, and that knowledge must be kept up by institutions, or records.

1. That there is such a thing as right and wrong, may, and must be known, without revelation.

2. That right must be attended with reward, and wrong with punishment, is known without revelation.

3. That therefore there must be a future state, for rewards and punishments, must be known without revelation.

4. That man is in a depraved state, at enmity with the Deity, is known without revelation; and must have been known so soon as that state of enmity began.

In this depraved state, man, attentive to his own circumstances, must have been in a condition infinitely wretched, the object of the just indignation of the Almighty here and hereafter; helpless, and hope-

less, because no defence against offended justice; and must have continued incapable of hope, or comfort, or of attempting any means of placating, or of obtaining the protection of the Deity, unless the mercy of God, and his acceptance of the atonement provided, had been revealed to him, with evidence of the authority of that revelation, so convincing as to gain absolute belief. This, and nothing less, could render life tolerable.

1. We know certainly that all men are, and from the earliest ages have been, in a state of enmity and corruption.

2. That men now have, and from the earliest times have had, comfort from a persuasion of mercy and forgiveness from God, contrary to reason, and the strongest evidence which from thence can result.

3. That the whole world, from the earliest times, used nearly the same rites, ceremonies, and institutions religious, for placating the Deity, averting wrath, procuring favour, returning thanks, by sacrifices, burnt-offerings, blood; means that, in nature, have no sort of connection with the end proposed, and therefore could not possibly have had their origin from reason, or natural light.

And, as this belief, and these religious observances, prevailed over all mankind, without any support from, but rather contrary to reason, it is a just conclusion, that the authority for such a belief, and such observances, must have been exceeding high and strong; and man cannot think of any sufficient authority to have produced that universal faith, short of divine revelation.

The doctrine of remission of sins, and expiation by blood, is, till the secret is explained by revelation, so destitute of any foundation in reason, and apparently

so contrary to it, that no Reasoner could ever have thought of it; and, if he had, no one could have given credit to it, without some convincing proof for the authority of that doctrine, which, as has been said, could not possibly have been from reason. The universal reception then of that doctrine, is a demonstration, in its own kind, that it had a divine authority.

If the Deity had determined to pardon man, by and through an Intercessor, and upon satisfaction, that would not have answered the end; unless man were acquainted with, and believed it, he would remain in the same gloomy state of despair, without the least glimpse of hopes, or encouragement to pray, to praise, to love, or to rejoice in the mercy and salvation of God; which would have left him a prey to his terrors and his lusts, and must have determined him to have shut out all thoughts of the Deity. For nothing could possibly determine man to hope, to pray, to praise, to serve, to rejoice in the protection of the Deity, but a firm conviction and belief that God was placated, would forgive, and protect, and was pleased with services.

If then it was the intention of God to pardon man, to restore him to a capacity of serving him, to reclaim him from his sinful state, to encourage him to love, fear, and serve his Creator; it was absolutely necessary, towards that design, to acquaint man with his intentions, to give such proof of those intentions as should convince and thoroughly persuade those to whom the revelation was made, and to preserve such evidence of that revelation to mankind as should be sufficient to support their faith and hope.

The lowest degree of faith that can possibly be sufficient to quiet the soul of man, and to restore him to a capacity of serving comfortably his God, and trusting to his favour and protection, is a firm conviction

that God is placable, and will pardon upon repentance, and protect.

Whatever degree of evidence or revelation fixed this in man's mind, restored him quiet, and a possibility of endeavouring to gain the favour of God; and supposing the belief absolute, must determine the man so believing, to seek and serve God, to the best of his ability and understanding.

They to whom the merciful intentions of God have been the most fully revealed, and to whom the evidence of that revelation has the most distinctly appeared, are in a much happier condition, and have many more incentives and helps to piety and devotion, than those who have just light enough to know that God is merciful, and to believe that he will pardon, upon repentance, and a hearty conversion of the desire of the soul towards him. But, if the belief of the latter is total and absolute, it may change his heart, and his course of life, and bring him within the favour and protection of his God. Hence faith, so much prized in the Old and New Testament; not that faith, as such, is of value; but because, where it truly is, it must produce a change of soul, and obedience. No man, who verily believes any fruit to be poison, will taste it; and let any man who knowingly sins, say what he will, he has not faith, when he so acts.

As this belief is absolutely necessary to all mankind, and must have been intended to reach them all, the evidence for inducing it, must be of that nature as to accommodate itself to all species of men. There must be that sort of evidence that leads the vulgar, the unthinking, the illiterate; and there must be also such proof as shall determine the ingenious, the inquisitive, the learned.

By much the greatest part of mankind have no other evidence for this belief, than general received

opinion; what has been held by their fathers, and all their acquaintance, passes for truth, and produces resolutions and actions.

It is impossible to believe any thing more firmly, than the vulgar do, that the earth stands still, and that the sun moves round: a belief as general, and as absolute, of the facts revealed for the comfort and salvation of mankind, would produce a conduct very different from what we see.

Where the common opinions about the devil, witches, witchcraft, &c. prevail, the belief is transmitted to posterity, and the children doubt as little as the fathers did.

If these things were true, and capable of demonstration, the vulgar would believe, not because of the demonstration, which they have not leisure, or learning, or capacity to enter into, but because of the fixed opinions of others from whom they learn.

For, as they are not true, nay some of them demonstratively false, the vulgar believe them, because they are not qualified to examine the demonstration.

But, if there is not such evidence as is fit to satisfy the learned and the inquisitive, it cannot produce belief in them; and the vulgar opinion cannot be of long continuance, where the learned and the inquisitive declare against it.

The evidence therefore attending revelation ought to be such as was fit to create and continue a very firm and general belief, and opinion, amongst the gross of mankind; and to conquer, and answer the doubts and scruples of the inquisitive and the learned.

That the first publication of the merciful intentions of God to men, and the declaration of so much as he thought fit to reveal concerning himself, and what was to be done and believed, was attended with sufficient evidence to support the authority of the reve-

lation, cannot be doubted, because the design was to gain belief.

And if, in every succeeding age, the same publication had been made, with the like evidence, there is no doubt we should have no unbeliever.

But, in fact, we see it has not pleased God to repeat in this manner the evidence of his revelation.

Nor is the not repeating the evidence, to satisfy the curiosity of impertinent and presumptuous objectors, who measure the conduct of the Deity by their own vain imaginations, any just cause of doubting the original revelation, if the proofs of that revelation are sufficient to induce belief.

God could have prevented man's sinning originally; he could have restored him absolutely to his pristine state; and he could have continued standing and perpetual obvious miracles, for confirming revelation: but he has done neither of these. And, though no other answer could be given to the question, Why has he not? but that it has not suited his wise scheme, for the government of his grace to man, it is beyond all doubt sufficient.

If it was the scheme of the Deity

To create man perfect, with a capacity of retaining that perfection, or of falling from it, which we call liberty, without interposing farther, to determine him either to the one, or to the other;

To restore him to a capacity of regaining happiness, by publishing means of salvation, with divine or supernatural evidence, and appointing the most feasible means for continuing the belief of that revelation, without farther interposing, till the ill use of the free-will, or liberty of man, made farther interposition necessary; and

To display omnipotent power, or remarkable events, when the notable defection of mankind made it necessary, in order to confirm or restore the revelation,

at that time, and to produce still stronger and stronger evidence for it, to succeeding generations; who dare presume to find fault with such œconomy?

Who can tell what wise ends the Deity may have to answer by shewing, in the several stages of the world, and under the different degrees of light and information, what use the heart of man was to make of free-will, and of the mercy of God offered?

If it was the intention of the Deity, to reveal to man the method of salvation; that a Saviour was to come in the flesh, by his death and suffering to atone for sin; and that the Saviour, having abolished sin by his sufferings, was to become intercessor for man, to reconcile him to the Deity, and produce communication between them; no doubt this might be, by convincing evidence, intimated and published at first: and the question is, What would be the most proper method for continuing to posterity the belief of the truth so revealed?

It does not appear that, in the earliest times, writing by letters, or recording facts, any other way, than by emblematical or hieroglyphical representations, was known or in use.

And, if writing by letters had been in use, such writing, to prove it of divine authority to succeeding generations, would require evidence.

Tradition surely was one way; but that, without other help, not very certain, and liable to infinite mistakes; as well as the authority of it, for that reason, liable to doubt.

But, if to tradition were added certain constant, equal, and emblematical observances, at fixed times, ever to be continued and endure; then, in proportion as the emblems were expressive, and universally received, the memory and belief of the matter presented would remain distinct and strong, and the end of recording be obtained.

Anniversary, monthly, weekly days observed, preserve fresh the memory of most events.

If therefore it was the command of God, that, to keep in mind the revelation that a Saviour, the first-born of a woman, should die for the sins of men, should by his blood atone, and become intercessor for mankind, man should kill a kid, or a lamb, shed its blood, sprinkle the blood towards the same place which the Deity directed to be emblematical of the place of its residence, chusing a perfect, unspotted male, as the emblem of the suffering Saviour, and a perfect first-born amongst men, as the emblem of the first-born, the Intercessor; and, if this emblematical act was to be repeated once, or oftener, every year, on a stated day; once every moon, on the first day; once every week, on the seventh day; and twice every day, morning and evening; and if, on those occasions, men were in the emblems to see, with sorrow, the representation of the blood they forfeited, and, with joy, to entertain the hopes of mercy through that blood, which the blood of the beast sacrificed represented; and to believe that God, on those occasions, was willing to hear their prayers, and receive their praises: the invention of man cannot devise any other method, so likely to preserve and perpetuate the knowledge and belief of a revelation, so necessary to mankind.

Men, indeed, might err, after a course of generations, in the exposition and application of those emblems, and emblematical actions; and, when the true sense and intention of them was varied, or in any degree lost, imagination would suggest other, and different, nay even false meanings; but, so long as the observance remained, a belief of placating the Deity by blood must remain: which belief is, of all others, the most unreasonable, except as it is explained, by

the original, and only true sense and meaning, of the emblems and institutions.

Thus, what was intended by the priest's intercessory office, was lost, though officiating by a priest remained; what was intended by the first-born's being to discharge the priestly office, was forgot, long before men ceased to look upon the right of priesthood to be in the first-born; what was intended by sacrificing a perfect male, was lost, whilst great accuracy was employed to take care that nothing but what was perfect should be sacrificed; nay, such was the weakness of mankind, that they forgot the blood shed was typical and emblematical only, and imagined a real virtue in it; than which nothing could be more absurd: but still they continued with the greatest zeal to make use of sacrifice, to believe it a mean of atoning for sins, of averting punishments, of procuring favours from the Deity; they thought sacrifice made their prayers and praises acceptable, that there was something sacred in it, that it bound contracts and covenants of all kinds, and that the Deity expected and required sacrifice of them, and would be highly offended if that service was discontinued.

So that, notwithstanding all the errors, wanderings, and false imaginations of mankind, they still retained, by this emblematical institution, a strong belief that the Deity was placable, and that sins were forgivable; which left it possible for them to hope, and to endeavour to gain the divine favour, and consequently to love and serve the Deity. And the perpetual and universal use of sacrifice, with particular rites, and under particular observances, after the original meaning and intention of them was lost, is a proof, not only of their divine origin, but also of the reality of that sacrifice which those emblems were intended to represent.

The original and primary use of sacrifice, and of all other religious institutions, was commemorative of the original revelation, a sort of daily memorial, or record, of what God declared, and man believed and hoped. But, as the declaration of God regarded a future event, every one, almost, of those institutions and emblematical ordinances, must be looked upon also as prophetic; which, when the event predicted happened, proves a demonstration, much above what humanity could invent, of the divinity of the institution, and of the certainty of the hopes and belief founded on that event.

Besides the original intention of being commemorative and predictive, there was a very useful design in the annual, monthly, weekly, and daily services, to give men frequent occasions of searching into themselves, as in the presence of the Deity; of confessing, worshipping, and adoring; and so reforming, and preserving their minds from folly. This, in time, they mistook for the chief end, forgetting the chief end almost entirely; and, at last, they greatly corrupted even the secondary design, imagining that there was merit in the sacrifice, as such; that the Deity loved sacrifice, and expected it, as a tribute that was due: though God never required sacrifice (it is in this sense the scripture says so) for his own sake, as one may say, but instituted it for the sake of men, as a memorial to keep in mind what he had revealed. To this end was the frequency; as well as to give frequent opportunities of worship, the true service of the heart, and reflection, which vain man almost entirely forgot.

As the antiquity and universality of sacrifice, notwithstanding the various corruptions, with which, by the imaginations of men, it was infected, is a proof of its divine original; so is the ridiculous polytheism of antiquity, evidence, in some degree,

of a plurality of persons in the Deity; as the opinion, in all appearance, must have flowed from some revelation, or institution, for preserving the memory and knowledge of that revelation.

Nothing is more remote from any foundation in reason, than the doctrine of the Trinity; and therefore it is a fair conclusion, that it must be owing to revelation, real or supposed.

As inconsistent as the Trinity seems to be with reason, polytheism, is no less so; all nature speaks for one Deity, and even the doctrine of the Trinity supposes it.

And yet in almost all the antient nations we find polytheism established; they had a plural to the noun God: nay, the eldest of all languages, the Hebrew, uses almost always the plural noun Elohim, when speaking of the Deity, frequently joined with plural verbs; though the scripture, the only book extant in that language, takes care to let us know that this plural Elohim is but one Deity.

Now, as the knowledge of the Trinity, if true, must be had by revelation, and not by reason: if the Deity was pleased to disclose so much of its own nature to mankind, it must do it by referring to ideas taken from natural things; and, if the knowledge of that discovery was to be recorded, whilst hieroglyphical or emblematical was the only writing, there must be a conjunction of three emblems in one, to represent what was intended. Such conjunctions, by Egyptian and other monuments yet extant, appear to have been very frequent in earlier times, and very probably owed their origin to the lawful emblems first proposed by the Deity; and the word in the Hebrew used to signify the image or representation of the Deity, carried about as an idol, is plural also [Teraphim], though relating only to one image or idol.

The imagination of man, however, as in the case of sacrifice, dropping the only rational thing, the Unity, made use of the plurality of persons in the one Deity, to coin a plurality of Deities; and, by retaining that notion against all reason, gives ground to conclude that it must have flowed from some very high, though mistaken original, and to enquire what the fountain of so extraordinary an opinion may have been.

As the imagination of man, proceeding from one mistake to another, must, at last, have obliterated the knowledge of all revelation, notwithstanding the wisest precaution to preserve it; it behoved the Deity, persisting stedfast in the purpose of mercy to mankind, to renew that revelation from time to time, and to rectify abuses, with such authority, for the renewal and rectification, as was sufficient evidence of the truth of what was revealed; and, if that merciful and perfect Being was to shut up all revelation, and to cease from farther interposition by extraordinary appearances amongst men, it behoved him to make the revelation so complete, and to leave it so fixed and unalterable, and attended with such evidence for the truth of it, as should leave no further room for error or doubt, amongst those, who, with respectful hearts to the Deity, sought after the truth.

Though it is extremely obvious, that such a revelation and rectification must have been; yet, seek for it amongst all the monuments, the wisdom, the records of the Heathen world, and you shall seek in vain; nothing but vanity and madness. The wisest of them, at least of those that have come to our hands, seem to have known little of man's fallen, desperate state; and, when they turned their thoughts to religion, appear to have known nothing further than a parcel of the lies and forgeries of their priests.

So that, if any of the antient Heathens wrote before their revelation was totally corrupted, it is lost; having been neglected by their successors, who did not understand what it meant.

But, in looking over mankind, as they are at this day, we find a nation in very particular circumstances, distinguished from all the people that are, or perhaps ever were upon the face of the earth; the children, as they believe, of one man; professing a religion different from that of all the nations that now are scattered up and down the whole earth; without dominion, power, or property any where; tenacious, to death, of their own religion and opinions; for that reason despised, hated, oppressed, and persecuted; and yet, subsisting in so prodigious numbers, that, were they to be brought together, they would prove a mighty people.

Examining the history of this people, (I mean the Jews) we find they were very powerful about 2000 years ago; possessed of a country, their own, and called by their own name; in the full exercise of a religion, with ceremonies, and services peculiar to themselves; in a firm belief, derived from their holy books, which they held to be revelation, that some very extraordinary person, of their blood and kindred, should then arise, who should deliver them from all their enemies, and set up a kingdom above all the kingdoms of the earth.

We find sometime after, that, encouraged by this opinion, they quarrelled with the Romans; and, after the most obstinate defence that ever people made, were utterly overthrown, their city and temple destroyed, and those that escaped the sword, scattered up and down over the face of the earth.

We find that the particularity of their faith and service, the distinction that subsisted between them and other nations, and the seditiousness and mutiny

of their deportment, founded on the persuasion of a great Deliverer to come, brought total dissipation upon them; so that they became every where the object of severe laws and ill usage.

And we find, nevertheless, that for near 1700 years they have remained, under all these distresses and difficulties, a people distinct from those they live amongst, tenacious of their own religion and observances, not to be bribed or frightened from them, and fully convinced their religion is immediately from God, and that the great Deliverer, for them, is still to come.

A circumstance so very singular calls for extraordinary attention. Of the many nations and kindreds famous for prowess, for laws, for religious opinions, is there any that remained, that preserved their name after a conquest? Did not all mix and blend themselves with the conqueror? Of all the religions that ever have been, did any stick so close to the profession of it, that, for a series of ages, they did not forsake it for the religion of the country they became subjects of; that infamy and oppression could not drive them from it, but rather riveted them the stronger in it?

And this is still the more amazing, that the religion they hold, is of all others the most absurd, as they understand it; and that the hopes they entertain are, undoubtedly chimerical and false.

Inquire of this people, and you shall find their faith is founded on a book, which contains their law, said to have come immediately from God, the history of this nation, and certain hymns, and prophecies, all which they firmly believe to have been written by Divine inspiration, and to contain the will, and word of God.

This book they entertain with the highest esteem, and preserve with such scrupulous exactness, that there are in the copies of it fewer various readings

than in any other book extant; that they have never suffered a various reading, how true soever, to enter into the text; and that, as fond as they are of their method of pointing, for varying the sound, and thereby the sense in some degree, of the Hebrew words, they have never dared to add those points to the copies of their law read in their synagogues, believing that such an addition would be a profanation.

That this book is not fictitious, nor in any part forged to gratify the vanity of the Jews, but, when first given to them, came with authority sufficient to enforce the reception of it, will appear to those who look into it, from this observation; that throughout, the Jews are described as the vilest, the wickedest of all men; they are severely reproved for their faults; destruction is threatened; nay it is, formally, and over and over again, predicted, that they shall be confounded; that they shall be dark, and blind; that the book, which they keep, shall be sealed up from them; that they shall not understand, and therefore shall be rejected; and the nations, at large, taken to be the people of God, in their room.

Receiving the book originally, with such a sting in it, shews the authority was high; preserving it entire, without striking out or altering such passages, proves the book was held sacred: not to mention, here, the argument arising for the authority of the book, from the exact completion of the predictions.

The first cursory view of this book must fill any man, who has looked into all the remains of the ancient learning, philosophy, and religion of the nations, with a strong prepossession in its favour. Amongst all these, nothing but folly and impertinence is to be met with; no tolerable idea of the Deity; none of the duty of man, from the true motive; none at all of the chief and peculiar felicity of the human race, in the enjoyment of the favour of God.

But in this book, from one end to the other, the praises of God, described as One, Spiritual, Infinite, Eternal, Merciful, Gracious, Long-suffering, Just, Powerful, in short, infinitely Perfect, are every where to be met with. The duty of man is placed where it ought to be; and the felicity of man is described to consist in the enjoyment of the favour of the Deity, to be obtained by conforming to the will of God, and yielding him the heart. This is the language, the spirit of the whole; nothing contradictory to this, whatever vain men may fancy to the contrary, from some ill-understood passages.

This reflection will not be so prevailing with the unlearned; who, in the most common books since the Christian æra, meet with the most just, and at the same time the most noble and sublime ideas; which are all, though they do not know so much, taken from the Jews' sacred book: but it will be very cogent with those that have read all the remains of the Heathen world, prior to Christianity; and who alone can make the comparison, and see the peculiarity of the character of this book, as it differs from all others, the productions of men.

This book, taken all together, seems intended to promote religious respect and service to the Deity, and to raise strong hopes and confidence of mercy and felicity.

It contains a complete system of sacrifice, with all the rites and religious observances thereto belonging, said to be delivered to the children of Israel by the Deity, in the most solemn manner, by the hands of Moses.

This system, which is called the law, or the directory, is said to have been published by the Deity, in a manner attended with great signs and wonders, in the presence of all the people, as to some part of

it; and, as to the rest, by Moses, to whose authority God, by very surprising miracles, gave credit.

This law is said to have been reduced into writing by Moses, at the command of God, to be for ever preserved, and observed; with promises of perpetual felicity, in case of observing, and threats of blindness and destruction, to the whole nation, in case of not observing it.

This law was given to the children of Israel, the issue of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; to each of whom it was promised, that out of their seed should arise That which should bless the whole earth. This people is said to have been, by the immediate providence of God, kept distinct from all other nations, till the law was directly given unto them; and then, by the very tenor and tendency of that law, was to remain distinct from all other people, so long as their nation subsisted.

By the scheme of this institution it appears, that the people were to be under the immediate government of the Deity; to possess a fruitful land, in the middle of the then best peopled part of the earth; that God was to be, in a particular manner, present with them, to be consulted with, in a sacred place, (first in the tabernacle, and then in the temple,) by sacred rites, and to give decisions, and directions; and that, from time to time, he was to raise up prophets to admonish, rebuke, and direct.

Besides the writings ascribed to Moses, called the law, the book contains the history of the nation from Moses's time to their first captivity, for their defection from God, predicted first in the law, and afterwards by succeeding prophets.

It contains the writings and predictions of several prophets, and the psalms, or religious hymns of the nation, employed in the divine service, and composed by inspired men, for the use of the people.

In these hymns, and other writings, a system of the faith and hope of the enlightened Jews is to be met with; the true meaning and use of emblems, symbols, and types is explained; errors in practice and opinion are reprov'd; the expectation of mercy and salvation by a Divine Person is rais'd; that Person is, under various representations, described; the change of the, then, present institution for a better is intimated; the blindness, and total defection, and destruction of the Jews, with their state and temple, is predicted; the calling into their room the Gentiles, is foretold; and the time, for that great event, limited and described with characters and marks that cannot be mistaken.

If the book, then, that contains all these things, be divine, it is plain that God did not leave man without farther assistance to aid and induce his faith, after promulgation of peace, but that he renewed the glad tidings; as, from the nature of the thing, ought to have been done.

And, if it shall appear to be true, that the manner in which he renewed that revelation has furnished a demonstrative, permanent evidence, which never needs to be renewed, of his grace and favour to lost man, it calls for belief, and the highest acknowledgment of his mercy and wisdom.

If the history of Moses, his miracles, his communication with the Deity, is true, there is no possibility to call in question the truth of what he delivers.

As the law, and institution founded by Moses, was to establish religion, and to make mercy and peace known to the whole earth, the writings ascribed to him begin with the creation, and carry down a general account of the concerns of mankind, till the election of Abraham and his seed.

The thing Moses begins with, is the creation of the heavens and the earth by the Deity; which, though

true to the conviction of all mankind, no antient wise-man ever found out. Here is no ridiculous *theogonia*, no eternal *chaos*, no fortuitous concourse of atoms; but a fair and a true declaration, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

He further takes notice of the institution of the Sabbath; which, though the antients observed, they knew not the reason, or occasion of.

The declaration of this undiscovered truth, gives strong prepossession in favour of the rest.

The next important thing is, that man fell from a state of innocence. This, as has been said, every living man must find to be true, upon examination; and yet none of the wise, whose works have come to us, ever thought of it: nothing more certain, nothing more important to be attended to; nothing less known: but this Moses distinctly relates as the cause, or at least the occasion, of every thing that followed.

The third thing he marks is, the confusion, and desperate state, in which man was, upon the fall; ashamed of his fault, without hope in the mercy of God, and therefore studious to hide himself from him. This, the fall being true, must necessarily be true too; and therefore we readily believe Moses.

The fourth thing he relates is, that God revealed his purpose of mercy to mankind, and thereby delivered them from dread, despair, and confusion. The words in which Moses relates the promise of mercy, are, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, and the seed of the serpent should bruise his heel."

These words, which are all that is said, do not, it is true, say that this seed of the woman should be sacrificed; though bruising the heel looks mighty like the suffering of the lower and least noble part of that seed; nor do they say that sacrifice, and the other

observances of the law, were then instituted : but it appears plainly, that, soon after, Cain and Abel offered, and that at a stated or appointed time ; it appears Noah sacrificed, and that, in his days, man was commanded to abstain from eating blood, as a thing sacred ; it appears the patriarchs did so, without any precedent, institution, or commandment, recorded, and that their sacrifices were respected by the Deity ; and it appears that all the nations of the earth, who sprung from the first parents, practised sacrifice, with nearly the same rites : Wherefore, it may fairly be concluded, that sacrifice, and the rites thereto belonging, were instituted upon the first promulgation of the *Evangelium*, the tidings of mercy, and from that institution were transmitted to all mankind ; and it would imply an absurdity to suppose, that this emblematical, commemorative observance was instituted without man's knowing the reason and meaning of it.

We know by history, without the help of Moses, that all mankind sacrificed in hopes of mercy ; from reason we discover, that those hopes must have been founded on revelation, and that sacrifice (which of itself could signify nothing) must have been no more than a memorial, by institution : and now from Moses we learn, that those hopes were actually founded on explicit revelation by the God of nature ; and that sacrifice, which the same God says in itself signifies nothing, was practised, just after, by the favourites of the Deity, and acceptable to him ; and that he gave a new model of that institution, correcting abuses, in the wilderness.

We learn, next, from Moses, that God was pleased at different times to appear to, and converse with men, Adam, Enoch, Noah ; and that, nevertheless, men corrupted themselves so monstrously, (an early instance whereof is Cain's killing his brother Abel)

that the Deity brought on a flood, which destroyed the whole earth, and with it all men, except Noah and his family.

This flood all antient nations have confused tradition about; and though *exuvia*, still remaining near the surface of the earth, give very strong evidence of it, yet there is no sensible account of it, from the antients: which strongly raises the credit and authority of Moses's writings.

By the direction to take into the ark a greater number of clean than of unclean beasts, and by Noah's practice, immediately after the flood, of sacrificing of every clean beast and bird, it is evident the distinction of clean and unclean does not depend originally on the law of Moses, but has its origin before the flood, probably at the first publication of grace to Adam.

As the flood destroyed all the corrupted, and to Noah and his family was demonstration of the power of, and obedience due to, the Deity, this great event was a total extirpation of all false religion; and, humanly speaking, it was to be hoped the faith and religious service of men would have continued long pure.

But that was not the case: for, as Adam's son Cain sinned early, so did Noah's son Ham; he merited to be pronounced accursed of his father, soon after the deliverance from the flood. And, before the memory of that dreadful judgment was lost, men meditated the setting up a false religion and service to the heavens at Babel; which the Deity disappointed, by confounding and dividing their imaginations, so that they separated and dispersed at that time:

As Moses relates the destruction of the antediluvian world by the flood, so he gives an account of repopulating the earth by the three sons of Noah, giving a brief abstract of the descent of the families from these

three sons: and it is extremely remarkable, and strongly confirms the truth of Moses's history, that, from the most accurate and judicious inquiry into the profane records and monuments extant, it does appear the world has been repeopled in the manner which Moses describes, and nearly about the same time, counting backwards from known periods, by the justest rules.

After the account given of the irreligious attempt at Babel, of the descent of mankind from Noah's sons, and of the peopling of the earth, Moses begins the history of the Jewish nation, descended from Abraham, who was sprung of Shem. This history, as to certain events, is very particular: it describes Abraham as called, immediately by God, away from a family and land that had begun to corrupt itself, to enter into a formal covenant with God: it describes the promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham, and to his seed, which is expressed in very extraordinary terms: it describes the same promise repeated to Isaac, and to Jacob: It relates the institution of circumcision, (which, if instituted before, seems to have been left off,) to be observed by the whole race of Abraham: it relates the manner of the children of Israel's going into Egypt, their bitter servitude there, and their separation from the Egyptians: it records their miraculous deliverance by the hand of Moses: it relates their long sojourning in the wilderness, and their progress toward the land promised: it relates the miraculous and surprising manner of the promulgation of the law by the Deity, with extraordinary signs and wonders: it records all the rites and ceremonies of the sacrifice, and of the whole religious service of the Jewish church: it records the constitution of the Jewish civil government, which, as well as the religious, had God for its head: it describes the tabernacle, the residence of the supreme

Governor, till the temple should be built: it records the promise of the advent of another Prophet, like unto Moses, who was to be heard: it relates a formal cutting off the type of the predicted Purifier, or the renewal thereof, and the terms upon which the people should partake of the benefit of that purification, commonly translated, a covenant between God and the people; wherein strict obedience is promised on the part of the people, and, on that condition, great and perpetual blessings promised on the part of God; but a manifest prediction is, at the same time, made of the people's defection, and of their future destruction.

And the end of all this surprising disposition, and œconomy, manifestly is to record, with great accuracy, the law with its several rites and ceremonies, and to recommend the exact observance of it; to the end it never should be lost, or fall out of the view and knowledge of mankind; but the particulars of it, and the authority by which it was promulgated, should remain attested, to future generations, by better and stronger evidence than any other matter of fact ever was amongst men.

And, if the giving this law, and the selecting and constituting this people to be the depositaries of it, in this manner, was the immediate act of God, it must certainly be of infinite consequence to have had that law so recorded, and preserved; and yet, if you look only at the obvious and outside appearance of that law, it was of little or no use, and the observance of it has ceased many hundred years ago, and is now, without a miracle, become impracticable; whereas, viewing it in the light already hinted, it becomes the evidence of all hope and faith.

The evidence the Jews had to believe the several matters related by Moses, preceding the deliverance from Egypt, was, so far as we know, no more than

Moses's word; whose credit was sufficiently established, by the testimonies given to him by the Deity; but, at the same time, it is not certain that they had not some distinct tradition concerning these things.

But, as to his authority, and the authority of the laws and institutions given by him, they had, and their children, and we, who take it from their children, have the strongest evidence the nature of the thing is capable of. For,

1st, The whole people, an infinite multitude, were witnesses of all the miracles wrought preceding the deliverance from Egypt, and of the final miracle that atchieved their deliverance; in memory whereof, the passover, an annual solemnity, was instituted, with the strongest injunctions, to acquaint their children with the cause of that observance, and *to mark that night throughout all their generations for ever.*

2^{dly}, The whole people were witnesses to the miracle in passing the Red Sea, and sung that hymn which Moses composed on that occasion, which was preserved for the use of their children.

3^{dly}, The whole people were witnesses to the dreadful promulgation of the law from Sinai, with which they were also to acquaint their children; and the feast of Pentecost was annually to be observed on the day in which that law was given; besides that, the very tables in which the ten commands were written, were deposited in the ark, and remained, at least, till the building of Solomon's temple, and probably till the destruction of it.

4^{thly}, The whole people were witnesses to the many miracles wrought, during the space of forty years, in the wilderness; to the pillar of fire and cloud, to the manna, quails, &c. a sample of the manna remained to future generations; and they

were directed to relate what they saw to their children.

5thly, The whole people were witnesses to the framing and building of the ark, and tabernacle; they were all contributors to it; they saw the cloud fill, and rest upon it, and they assisted at the services performed there; and, to commemorate this, as well as their sojourning in tents in the wilderness, the annual feast of tabernacles was appointed, which, in succeeding years, they were to explain to their children.

As these things were absolutely sufficient to satisfy the children of Israel, then in being, touching the authority and obligation of this law, several things were added to enforce the observance, and to preserve the memory and evidence of what was to be observed.

1st, The law was by Moses, at the command of God, put into writing, for the greater certainty, as well as all the directions for making the ark, the cherubim, the tabernacle, the priests' garments, &c. and all the rules of government, judicature, &c. with every other circumstance revealed, for directing the faith and the conduct of the nation.

2dly, This law was to be preserved, perused, and attended to, in the most careful manner; the priests, who were to judge in questions relating to it, must be well versed in it; the king, who was to rule over the nation, was to write out a copy of it for himself, and to peruse it continually; and the people were to write out passages of it, and to wear them, by way of signs, upon their hands, and of frontlets, between their eyes, and to write them upon the posts of their doors, &c. And they were to teach their children the most notable parts

of it, and particularly to instruct them in the miracles attending the deliverance from Egypt, as they sat in their house, as they walked by the way, as they lay down, and as they rose up, &c.

3dly, Besides the authority that promulgated the law, there was a solemn covenant and agreement between God and the people, whereby the people became bound to keep, preserve, and observe this law, and all that was contained in it; and God became bound to be the God of the Israelitish people, to protect, and prosper them: and this covenant, towards the end of their sojourning in the wilderness, was solemnly renewed.

4thly, The particulars of this covenant, upon God's part, were, to give the people the good land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey; to preserve and protect them in it; to give them perpetual indurance, and victory over their and his enemies; to prosper them in all their labours; to give them the increase of their fields, and flocks; and to make them a great, a happy, and a flourishing people; on condition that they kept and obeyed his law.

5thly, The particulars, on the part of the people, were, to serve Jehovah, and no other God, in the way directed by the law; to preserve, observe, and obey the law carefully and exactly; and, if they failed or transgressed, to submit and consent to the severe sanction of the law and covenant, which, in many instances, was, to individuals transgressing, death, [*to be cut off from the people,*] and to the bulk of the people, destruction, captivity, dispersion, blindness, madness, &c. besides the forfeiture of all the good promises.

6thly, Besides the other blessings, and pre-eminencies, God was, by some special visible symbol of his presence, to reside continually with the peo-

ple; first, in the tabernacle, which was made in the wilderness for that end, and, afterwards, in the temple; whence he was to give judgment and directions, and to answer prayers, and accept of vows.

7thly, This covenant was also reduced into writing, and was the tenure by which the Israelites held the land of Canaan, and on which all their hopes were founded: wherefore it must in all generations be considered by them as a thing of no small moment.

As God was the head of this state, and as the people held immediately their land of him; so he made several regulations for holding that property, that are very remarkable.

1st, The land was by his command divided into twelve lots, one for each tribe; and they were put in possession accordingly, to the exclusion of the tribe of Levi, who for their portion had no more than what attended the service of God's house, and some cities, with suburbs, dispersed amongst other tribes.

2dly, Not only were the descendents of each tribe to enjoy, in exclusion of other tribes, their own lot, but the particular fields and parcels, within each tribe, were to remain for ever with the respective families that first possessed them, and, on failure of the issue of the possessor, to the nearest of that family: Hence, all land sold returned at the Jubilee to the proprietor, or his nearest a-kin; he who had right to avenge blood, might redeem.

3dly, This right of blood, depending upon knowledge of descent and genealogy, made it absolutely necessary for the children of Israel to keep very exact records and proofs of their descent;

not to mention the expectation they had of something, surprisngly singular, from the many promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that the blessing to mankind should spring from their seed; and, in tracing their genealogy, we see they were very critical, upon their return from Babylon: so that, before their records were disturbed by the captivity, it could not well be otherwise, but that every body of any note amongst the Jews could tell you the name of his ancestor, who first had the family-possession, in the days of Joshua, and how many degrees, and by what descent, he was removed from him. And as these first possessors, pursuant to the custom of the nation, must have been described by their fathers' name, it is highly probable, they could have quoted by name that Ancestor who saw the miracles in Egypt, who saw the law given, who entered into the covenant, and who contributed to the setting up the ark and tabernacle.

4thly, The very surprisng care taken by the Deity to keep the breed of the Jews pure, and genuine, by the proofs of virginity, and by the miraculous waters of jealousy, is a circumstance that merits attention, and will easily induce a belief that descent and birth was a matter much minded amongst them. And,

5thly, The appointment and observance of the sabbatical year, and, after the seventh sabbatical year, a year of jubilee, for the general release of debts, lands, &c. is a circumstance of great moment, not only as these notable periods were useful towards the easy computation of time, but as it made enquiry into titles, and consequently genealogy, necessary every fiftieth year; and as the cessation from culture, every seventh year, gave continual occasions for the Deity's displaying his

power in increasing the crop of the sixth, pursuant to his promise.

Now, taking these circumstances together under consideration, could any human precaution have provided more means to keep up the memory and evidence of any fact? Could this have been done by human foresight or force? Has any thing like to it ever been in the world besides?

What could tend more to perpetuate the memory of any event, than to deliver a whole people, by public glorious miracles, from intolerable slavery? To publish a very extraordinary system of laws immediately from heaven? To put this law in writing, together with the covenant for the obeying it? To make the tenure of the possessions of the felicity of that people depend on the observance of this law? To appoint annual solemnities for keeping the law, and the giving of it, in mind? To appoint signs for the hands, and frontlets for the face, by way of memorandums? To enjoin perpetual private instruction by the parent to the children? To make the tenure of the estates depend on the original division of the land, to men who saw the miracles, and first took possession, and on the proximity of relation, by descent, to them? To appoint a return of lands every fiftieth year, which should give perpetual occasion to canvass those descents? To order a sabbath every seventh year for the land, the loss of which should be supplied by the preceding year's increase? And to select a whole tribe, consisting of many thousands, to be the guardians, in some degree the judges and the executors, of this law; who were barred from any portion of the land, in common with their brethren, and were contented with the contributions that came from the other tribes, without any fixed portion amongst them? This must keep up the belief and

authority of that law amongst the descendants of that people, or nothing could : and if such a belief, under all these circumstances, prevailed amongst a people so constituted, that belief could not possibly proceed from imposture ; because the very means provided, for proof of the truth, are so many checks against any possibility of imposition.

If any man will suggest, that the law of the Jews is no more than human invention, and that the book of the law is a forgery ; let him say when it was imposed upon that people, or at what period it possibly could have been imposed upon them, so as to gain belief, later than the period they mention, and under other circumstances than those they relate.

Could the whole people have been persuaded, at any one period, by any impostor, that they were told severally by their fathers, and they by theirs, that the law was given with such circumstances, and under such promises, and threats, if they were not really told so ; or that they, throughout all their generations, had worn certain passages of the law by way of frontlets and signs, if it had not really been so ?

Could the whole people have been persuaded to submit to the pain of death, upon all the offences the law makes capital, unless their fathers had done so, upon evidence of the authority of that law ?

Could the whole people have been persuaded that they had kept exact genealogies, in order to entitle them to the blessing, and to their inheritances severally, unless they actually had done so ?

Could the whole people believe that they had kept passovers, feasts of tabernacles, &c. down from the date of the law, commemorative of the great events they relate to, unless they had really done so ?

Could the children of Israel have been imposed on to receive an ark, and a tabernacle, then forged, and a complete set of service and liturgy, as descending from

Moses, by the direction of God, unless that ark and that service had come to them from their ancestors, as authorised by God?

Could the whole people have submitted to pay tithe, first-fruits, &c. upon any feigned revelation? Or,

Could the tribe of Levi, without divine authority, have submitted, not only to the being originally without a portion in Israel, but to the being incapable of any, in hopes of the contributions of the people; which, however large when the whole twelve tribes served at the same temple, became very scanty when ten of them withdrew their allegiance from heaven?

Could ever the * book of the law, if consigned to the Levites, and promulgated, have been lost, so as to give room for new fictions? Or could a book of the law have been forged, if there was none precedent, and put upon the people, as a book that had been delivered to the Levites by Moses? If no book at all ever was delivered by him to them, what authority could be pretended for such a book?

Had a book been to be forged, in order to be received by the people, could it have contained so many many scandalous reflections and accusations against the people, and so many fatal threats and predictions concerning them; and, if it had been so framed, would it have been received as authentic?

If the law, &c. was forged, it must have been before the days of David; because by the sacred hymns, in his time, the publication of the law is celebrated, and the law was observed: and yet the time between the entry of Israel into the land, and the reign of David, being but about four hundred years, is too short a space for forgetting the real manner of that

* *N. B.* The book of the law, found in the days of Josias, was the copy of the Covenant in the hand of Moses.

entry, and forging another, to be received by a people, whose genealogy was so fixed, and whose time was reckoned by such periods.

If the book of the law was not forged before the reign of David, it could not possibly be forged after, unless the whole history of the kingdom, the tabernacle, the temple, and all the sacred hymns and prophecies, are looked upon as one complete fiction; because the tabernacle, the temple, the œconomy of the kingdom, the sacred hymns, and all the other writings said to be sacred, bear formal relation to the law.

But, that all these things were not supposititious, is evident from the anxious zeal that possessed the Jews who returned from the captivity; from their solicitude to restore the city, the temple, and the sacred service; from their strict examination of their genealogies, and scrupulous care to comply with the law.

The space between the captivity and the return was so short, that some who saw the first temple, saw also the second, and many who were themselves, or at least whose fathers had been, officers in the first temple, returned to the service of the second: so that it is utterly impossible that the history, the liturgy, the service of the Jews, preceding the return, should be a fiction, at least that it should be a fiction earlier than the return.

And the story of this nation, from that period, falls in so much with the history of the rest of the world; their sacred books have been so soon after that translated, and they have been so famous for the tenaciousness of their laws, that there is no possibility of suspecting that their law and history was forged later than the return.

And, if it is granted, that the devotions, the precepts, the institutions, and rites and ceremonies, of this law, and the great lines of their history, are not

forged; one needs, as to the present consideration, be but little solicitous concerning the accuracy of the copy of the books of the law, and of the other sacred books; and whether there may not have been some mistakes or interpolations. It is not with one or one hundred words or sentences we have to do; it is with the system of the sacrificature, and the other religious laws and services of the Jews, and with the political establishment of their theocratical government, and the authority for the establishment of both, that we have, at present, concern.

For, if such a system of religious services and ceremonies was revealed and commanded by God; if, for the greater certainty, it was reduced into writing by Moses, by divine direction; if such a model of government was framed, as is manifestly calculated for keeping up the observance of those services, and preserving the memory of the institution, and keeping up the authority of the book wherein it is recorded; and if the nation, to whom this institution was delivered, have preserved it accordingly: complete evidence thence arises to us of the divinity of the institution; which confirms what has already been deduced from nature, and the history of the world, concerning revealed religion; and leads to a demonstrative proof of the truth of the Christian religion, to which all the emblematical institutions tend, and in which they center.

And, if one can but be once satisfied that this people was chosen and constituted in a way surprisingly particular, principally for preserving the oracles of God, the religion revealed by him to men, and the evidence thereof; one shall have little difficulty to believe that they were reasonably exact in this particular:

Especially if he recollects the absolute scrupulosity with which they preserve the sacred books, not having

dared, since the days of Jesus Christ, though their disputes with the Christians gave them the strongest temptation, to alter a letter, or to insert in the text used in their synagogues those very points which they have contrived to vary the signification of the words, to serve their purposes, though all of them say, and most of them believe, these points to be of divine original.

But the matter does not rest singly upon the presumption of accuracy and fidelity in the Jews: We have a translation made, near two hundred years before Christ, into Greek; and, by comparing that version with the Hebrew kept by the Jews, the diversities are not so many or so material as to make any difference in the sense and tendency of the whole. They may all have flowed from the ignorance or carelessness of interpreters, and from mistakes and accidents incident to copiers; and, where there is any diversity, it is easy to judge on which side the mistake lies, and the error must naturally be imputed to the translation, which cannot be presumed to have been handled with so great care and reverence as the original.

And we have, besides, an Hebrew copy of the Pentateuch kept by the Samaritans, mortal enemies to the Jews, and who would not probably co-operate with them towards any fraud. This copy, a very few immaterial things excepted, is literally the same with that of the Jews; and as the Pentateuch contains the very kernel, and the standing proof of that revelation which supports the Christian religion, it seems to be the direct act of Providence for confirming the truth of that important piece of revelation, that the Cuthians succeeded the ten tribes, and that they took up so much of their religion, as had been retained by these tribes, after their defection from the house of David, and preserved as sacred the Penta-

teuch, which would have been a check upon the Jews, had they falsified their's; and is a confirmation of the truth, as they have not, out of the mouth of enemies, at least of such as were in no confederacy with them.

And the existence of a copy of the Pentateuch in the hands of the Samaritans, who must have had it from the ten tribes, and they again must have retained it from the days of Jeroboam's revolt, is a proof, not only that that book, as it now stands, was extant, and the standard of the Israelitish sacred service and faith in the days of David and Solomon, but also that all the copies of the Pentateuch were not lost, as is foolishly supposed, in the days of Josiah; this one being then, clearly, amongst the revolted tribes, as the rule of the faith and practice of such of them as had not bowed their knee to Baal; besides many thousands that, probably, were in the hands of the Levites, and scattered over Judah and Benjamin: so that the copy of the law found in the temple, in the time of Josiah, was the copy of the Covenant in the hand of Moses, as the text asserts, and not the copy of the Pentateuch.

These reflections put the divine authority of the Jewish institution beyond all doubt; they shew it was the indispensable duty of the Jews to obey and observe it; and prove demonstrably, that it would be our duty, as well as their's, to comply with the same institution and observances, unless these shall appear to have been superseded and changed by the same divine authority.

And it is an event that calls loudly for our attention, that this institution, established solemnly by God, has ceased; the temple, chosen for his residence, has been destroyed; and his own peculiar people, whose head and protector he was to have been, and was

bound by covenant to be, have been utterly unpeopled and scattered near 1700 years ago.

To obtain satisfaction on this head, it is fit to recollect, that almost all the Jewish religious service consisted in external emblematical acts, rites, and observances, which, in themselves, and but for the institution, and what was intended to be represented by them, served for no good purpose.

The Hebrew word translated the Law, carries not in it, properly, the idea of authority enjoining or commanding, but it is taken from a word that signifies, originally, to demonstrate, to direct, to point out, the way; and all the precepts, commands, statutes, ordinances, and appointments, come promiscuously under that word which we translate Law.

It must be remembered, that throughout all the sacred Hebrew writings, as well in the law, as in the history, hymns, and prophecies, many matters concerning the law are declared by the Deity, and sentiments expressed which regulate the understanding, end, and meaning of it.

Nothing is more distinct than the several institutions, the positive and negative precepts of the law, if no more than the outward operation or observance is in question; but we find that, throughout the scriptures, and particularly the Book of Psalms, it was not, singly, the practice of the precepts, but *the meditation on them day and night*, that was the duty and delight of those that feared God; it was their prayer to be made to understand, to be taught them; it was the duty of the priest, and the prince in a particular manner, and it was the express command of God to Joshua, "to meditate in the law day and night; then should he do wisely."

It is no wonder that the law required meditation to unravel the true end and meaning of it; since, to instance in one particular, the principal institution of it,

to wit Sacrifice, in itself had no virtue at all, and it was contrary to common sense and reason it should have any.

It is not only contrary to common sense, that sacrifice should have any effect towards removing sin, and placating the Deity: but the same God who instituted sacrifice, tells over and over again the people, to whom he gave that institution, that he has no pleasure in sacrifice; that the blood of goats cannot atone for sin; that their sacrifices were useless towards the ends for which they imagined them profitable.

What then must the religious Jews, who believed that sacrifice was of divine institution, who believed at the same time that it was of no effect towards pardoning sin and procuring favour, and who were bound to meditate on the depths, the hidden things of the law, conclude? And what must we conclude who believe as they did? Can we conclude otherwise, than that this uncouth, unnatural observance, unprofitable and ineffectual in itself, was appointed to commemorate or point out something, emblematically, that the Deity was desirous to have pointed out and kept in mind?

As one great end of the religious institution, and of the frame of the commonwealth of the Jews, was to keep up perpetually the ordinance of sacrificature; another great end was to preserve, with proper evidence and authority, all the revelations and providences of God, recorded by Moses and the other inspired writers.

We know, then, certainly, from the revelation made by God and preserved by the Jews,

That God was to be merciful to man; that he promised "The seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent;" and, "that the seed of the serpent should bruise his heel."

That sacrifice was coeval with this revelation, or near it; Abel sacrificed acceptably.

That blood-shed was deemed holy; and sprinkling that blood the mean, and outward symbol, of making every thing on which it was sprinkled, the priest, the altar, the ark, &c. holy.

That, when God first declared his purpose of selecting Abraham, and his family, and made a covenant with him "to multiply his seed as the stars of heaven, and to give them the land of Canaan," he, at the same time, and with the same breath, declared, that "in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed."

That the same declaration was often repeated to Abraham, and to his successors Isaac and Jacob; which became the foundation of the hopes and expectations of their descendents, made them carefully preserve their genealogies, and greatly value themselves on being of the seed of those men, of whose seed should come That wherein all the families of the earth should be blessed.

That the first part of the covenant or promise was, literally, and in a very marvellous manner, fulfilled; the Israelites were miraculously put, and kept in possession of the land of Canaan: but, whilst they staid there, the second part was not performed, nor will they admit that it is to this hour performed.

That though this second part was not performed whilst the nation remained in possession of the first part of the promise, yet it was perpetually kept in view, and fresh hopes, by repeated promises, given of the same blessing, under very extraordinary descriptions.

The sceptre was not to depart from Judah, until Shiloh came, and to him was to be the gathering of people.

The throne was to be established with the seed of David for ever; the covenant was established with him; and of this seed of his, such marvellous things are spoken, as do not agree to any of his carnal successors, or to any mere man.

This son of David goes under the name of the Anointed of the Lord, and this anointed one is said to be also the Son of God, the King anointed on the holy hill of Sion. "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."

"A virgin was to conceive, and to bring forth a son, whose name was to be Emmanuel." "A new thing was to happen in the earth, a woman was to compass a man," Jer. xxxi. 22.

To the house of Israel "a child was to be born, to them a son was to be given, the government was to be on his shoulder: and his name was to be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there was to be no end, upon the throne of David," &c. Isa. ix. 6, 7.

"A rod was to come forth of the stem of Jesse, which should stand for an ensign to the people, and to which all the Gentiles should seek, whose rest was to be glorious."

Numerous are the promises and predictions of peace and salvation to come, not only to the Jews, but to all nations, by a mighty Conqueror, a great Prince, who was to sit on the throne of David; who is called David [*i. e.* the beloved] in prophecies delivered hundreds of years after king David's death; who was to rule in peace, to lead, and to defend his people; who is called The Righteousness, The Holiness, The Salvation of Jehovah, The righteous Servant of the Lord, who was to deliver Israel from their sins;

who was to be a light, was to be salvation to the Gentiles; who was to be given for a covenant to the people; who was to restore peace and joy to mankind; a fountain was to be opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness.

The righteous Servant of the Lord was to suffer for mankind, for the sins of the people; he was to bear their iniquities; to be bruised for them; to be unjustly condemned in judgment, and to suffer death; to make his body an offering for sin: but he was to divide a portion with the great, &c. because he had exposed his body unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and made intercession for the transgressors.

This extraordinary person, who was to do those wondrous things, is described as sitting on the right hand of God; as the fellow of God, against whom the sword was to be employed to smite him; and the people were, at last, to look upon him whom they had pierced; and to mourn for him as one mourneth for his eldest son: but this was not to be till the spirit of prayer and supplication should be poured out on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Messiah the anointed One, the Prince, was to be cut off, at a determined period, but not for himself.

And many and various predictions are scattered every where throughout the sacred writings, that the Jews shall be rejected, and the Gentiles called to the service of God, and to enjoy the blessings promised to Israel.

These several wonderful predictions and promises, with many more of the same kind, could not possibly be overlooked by the Jews; or thought to relate to any thing but the great, the important branch of the original covenant with Abraham, not performed

when the nation was in possession of the land, to wit, that *in his seed all the nations of the earth were to be blessed*. This was too considerable a part of the covenant to be overlooked, or to remain unperformed; and it is no wonder that the Jews, from it, and from these several predictions, promises, and declarations, that related to it, expected with confidence that blessing to all nations in the Messiah, who was to be of the seed of David.

Taking then all these predictions and promises together, and joining them with the original covenant made with Abraham, it is as clear as the sun's light, that the extraordinary person promised, and described to be the son of David, and the Son of God, the anointed One, the beloved, was the seed promised to Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.

And therefore the Jews, who believed the scripture to be infallible truth, were insuperably determined to believe this extraordinary person, whom they call the Messiah, was to come; and we, who believe the same scripture to be the word of God, must necessarily conclude, that he either is come, or is to come; or else we must admit that God has given his authority to the belief of a falshood, which is monstrously absurd.

The Jews may value themselves as much as they please on their being the favourite people, and may flatter themselves in the opinion that the Messias was intended peculiarly for them, and that the covenant with Abraham, and the whole structure of, and divine Providence about, their law and nation, was meant only, and primarily, for them: but we, of the nations, beg leave to differ with them, and to insist, that in the seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth, and amongst them we, were to be blessed; that their Messias was to be the light of the nations;

that he was given for a covenant to all people ; and that he was to bring salvation to all men.

And we must observe, that all that part of the covenant that regarded the land of Canaan, and the Jewish people in particular, was conditional, forfeitable upon breach of covenant by the Jews ; and actually forfeited, as they themselves must own, and as their own scriptures testify : whereas the promise of blessing to the nations, in the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is absolute, and unconditional, and believed necessarily to be performed, whatever came of the Jewish law and commonwealth.

The city and government of the Jews is now destroyed, and dissolved ; they are unpeopled, as we may say, and remain scattered up and down the face of the earth ; their system of religious service is now no more practised, nor practicable ; no man can trace his descent from Aaron, so no man amongst them can lawfully shed blood ; nor can any prove his descent from David, so none can know the Messiah by his pedigree, were he yet to come. It is near 1700 years since the temple, to which the Messenger of the Covenant was to come, was destroyed utterly ; and yet the Jews will neither admit that the Messias is come, nor that their scripture is false ; which is very extraordinary.

It was equally the interest of the nations, as of the Jews, to have looked out for the advent of the Messias ; but they did not know what concern they had in that event, and therefore could not be solicitous about it. The Jews were justly solicitous about it, and had all the marks, and tokens, given by infallible revelation, by which to know it ; but, in pursuance of the blindness predicted to themselves, they did not see it.

It is an amazing Providence, that the Jews, who looked for the Messiah, did not see or receive him

when he came; and that the Gentiles, who knew little, and had no expectation of him, saw and received him, and in him the blessing. This is surprising; but it did not happen by chance; it was predicted by Moses and the prophets.

Daniel had fixed a determined time for the advent of the Messiah; the whole nation knew it, and expected him, about the time he came; their expectations ran so high, that the confidence founded upon them, pulled on their ruin, and final destruction. The Messiah came when they expected him, and yet they knew him so little, that they became his executioners, and put him to death as a blasphemer.

In Jacob's blessing to Judah, or rather prophecy concerning him, "the sceptre was not to depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh came;" and all the Jews, by Shiloh, understood the Messiah.

In Daniel's prophecy the advent of the Messiah, who is to be cut off, is to be followed by the utter destruction of the city, the temple, the law, the commonwealth of the Jews.

Though the Jews were so blind as not to see the Messiah when he came, but, instead of receiving him, to cut him off; it is astonishing, that, when they had cut him off, when they saw their city, their temple, their commonwealth, and their holy service, at an end, they did not see their mistake, and look to him whom they had pierced.

If the sceptre was not to depart from Judah till Shiloh came, it is a necessary consequence, that, if the sceptre is actually departed, Shiloh must certainly be come.

At the time predicted, and when the Jews expected the Messiah, a man of the tribe of Judah, and family of David, appeared in Judea, *preaching repentance, and remission of sins*: He declared he was the Messiah,

the Son of God, sent to save mankind; and, as an evidence of his mission, wrought in the sight of the people great numbers of amazing miracles; he opened the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf; he restored speech to the dumb, and health to multitudes of sick persons, by his single *fiat*: He said he came to fulfil, and put an end to the law, to die for the sins of mankind: He taught as never man taught. But, being in a form too humble and lowly for the expectations of the Jews, he was arraigned of high treason against the Roman power, and of high treason against the head of the Jewish commonwealth, that is blasphemy; was tried, convicted upon his own acknowledgment that he was the Son of God, and ignominiously crucified, and buried: and though he did not use his divine power to avoid that death, which he said he was to undergo, yet he ever had that power to confirm his own promise, that he was to rise again the third day; he rose, instructed the disciples he had elected, and ascended into heaven; having first promised to send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter; who was accordingly sent, and filled the apostles, and disciples.

As the Jews, that is, the high-priest and the nation, not knowing this person, put him to death for pretending to be the Messiah, it is but natural to think they would for some time persist in their opinion; and therefore they made use of all means to justify their own opinions and conduct, to weaken his credit, to make him pass upon the world for an impostor, and to oppose the propagation of his doctrine.

As the Heathen world was at that time deep sunk in ignorance and superstition, and, where superstition did not prevail, strongly biased to atheism, the philosophy of Epicurus; it was against all probability

that the surprizing, the self-denying doctrine of Jesus should prevail.

Nevertheless, in less than 300 years, in spite of the fierce opposition of the Jews; in spite of the many persecutions from the Roman emperors, who were then lords of the whole known earth; in spite of the ignorance and weakness of the first followers of Christ, the apostles, who were chosen of the lowest rank of the people, the doctrine of that crucified Jesus so far prevailed, as to become the religion of the whole known world (the Jews excepted): such influence had the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and the miracles wrought.

If any man shall wantonly think fit to call in question (notwithstanding the evidence) that miracles were wrought, and shall aver that none were performed; let him consider, whether, on that supposition, it is not a miracle, and evidence of divine power beyond all cavilling, that this doctrine, in the hands of such men, against such opposition, prevailed over mankind in so short a space, without the assistance of any power but the power of God, and the proofs brought from the scriptures.

The doctrine taught by the followers of Jesus was, That he was the Son of God, the promised Messiah; that he came, pursuant to the covenant of grace, to shed his blood for the remission of sins; that pardon and grace was thereby to be had; that the law served only to point him out, and describe him; and that the blood of sacrifices were but emblems, and types, of his blood; who, having therein washed mankind from their sins, was for ever to make intercession for such as believed, and expected mercy.

This doctrine prevailed early over such of the Jews as waited humbly for the salvation of God, and whose notions were not totally debauched; it prevailed over such of the Gentiles as retained notions

of atonement by blood: but it made no progress among the hardened Jews, who crucified their Messiah, who by all arts whatever, except falsifying the text of their sacred books, endeavoured to stifle the new doctrine, and keep their own in countenance; though it is highly astonishing it should not have prevailed over them, when their city and temple were razed, and when it became the light of the Gentile world.

It is easy, by running over the many typical and prophetical predictions in the law and the prophets, and shewing the harmony and accomplishment in the person of Jesus, to heighten the demonstration of the truth of the Christian religion, and the amazement at the surprising hardness of the Jews; but, postponing that for a little, can any man, from what has been already stated, doubt that the Christian religion is that pointed out by the Judaic dispensation, and that it is divine, unless he admit that the Judaic dispensation is a pure forgery, or that the Deity can fail in fulfilling his promises?

Or, can any man reflect on the blindness and obstinacy of the Jews, in shutting out the light which shone amongst themselves, and which from them only shone out to the rest of the world, without observing the immediate finger of God in this astonishing event which happened, being predicted?

Considering with due attention these circumstances, it is impossible not to perceive skill much greater than human contrivance, as well as power divine, in preparing and furnishing evidence for the truth of the Christian religion; or, which is the same thing, the doctrine of pardon and mercy through the blood of Christ.

This doctrine, not resulting from nature or reason, is not capable of proof *a priori*, or from reason; and

therefore must depend on evidence external, as other matters of fact do.

Miracles, or the immediate interposition of Almighty Power controlling the common course of nature, may be proof of revelation; but the proof of those miracles may decay, by length of time, and by degrees, unless some very extraordinary mean is used by the Deity to preserve the proof of such miracles.

Prediction of natural events that do not depend upon a certain unchanging course of nature, is, when the event happens, proof that the prophet had his prediction from heaven.

Prediction of miraculous or supernatural events, when these events happen, is the highest evidence of the intervention of the Deity; and, if one can be certain that the event was predicted, and accordingly happened, no doubt at all can remain the prediction and the event were both from God; and, supposing such a thing to have happened, for the confirmation of any doctrine, the only requisite to perpetuate that proof to posterity would be, to provide such a history of the prediction and accomplishment, as could not, justly, be suspected, or called in question.

The chief causes for denying assent to the truth of facts, recorded in history are,

That the historian may have been ill informed, and may have taken what he wrote without sufficient evidence;

That the historian may be single, unsupported by any other collateral evidence, in which case his veracity may be questioned; and,

That the history, in length of time, may be vitiated, interpolated, or altered, to be accommodated to prevailing notions or opinions.

Now, if the sacred institution and civil œconomy, of the seed of Abraham is considered, as calculated to receive, to preserve, and to communicate the revela-

tion of the good will of God to man, it furnishes a testimony to that truth, superior to all doubt, and to any other evidence that ever supported a matter of fact.

The historian could not be deceived: the miracles related, were wrought in his and in the sight of the whole people, and many of them not single acts, but reiterated, some repeated for forty years together.

The historian cannot be looked upon to be single; (I consider the whole people as joint historians attesting the truth of Moses's relation): what he relates was done in the sight of many hundreds of thousands; they all agree the relation to be fact; they receive his account of it, hold it certain and sacred; observe the precepts; expect the promises; submit to the sanction; and hold their whole land, the possession of each individual, and the offices in the church and state, by that tenure.

The suspicion of any alteration, or interpolation, to promote any favourite point or opinion, is absolutely excluded, by the religious reverence had, at all times, for the sacred book; by the many reproaches every where to be met with therein against the Jews, which their scrupulosity prevented their meddling with; and by the many predictions, not only of those mischiefs to the nation which happened to them before the sacred book went out of their own hands, and language, into other hands, and languages, but of those mischiefs also which happened some hundreds of years after the scriptures were published in foreign languages, and continue to happen at this day; I mean, their rejecting the Messiah, and putting him to death, the subversion of the state and temple, and their dispersion, blindness, and obstinacy: for I take it to be an event of all others the most surprising, and the least to be accounted for from the nature of things, that the Jews should continue, under such circum-

stances, and in such numbers as they are, firm even to death in the belief of their scriptures, and the hopes of a Messiah, and yet blind and obstinate to madness in rejecting that Messiah, whom every one that considers, but they, evidently sees, and with joy submits to.

Had the nation of the Jews seen in Jesus the Messiah, and submitted to him, the scriptures would not have been fulfilled.

Had they, after his death, universally acknowledged him, as many individuals of the nation did, they, as these individuals did, laying aside all national distinctions, would have been sunk and lost in the general mass of Christians; and we should have had no more than an historical account of their having once existed, as we have of the Athenians, Spartans, Samnites, &c.

Had this been the case, the authority of the sacred book would have rested solely on itself; there would not have been one living witness to prove its authenticity, or to prevent the suspicion that it was forged, as *the Fragments of the book of Enoch, the Testaments of the twelve Patriarchs, the Sibylline Oracles*, and multitudes of other pious cheats, most certainly were.

Or, had the Jewish nation maintained its land, preserved its government, and turned Christian with the rest of the world, the books they should then exhibit as sacred, would not be altogether free from suspicion: those, who combat their truth, as they stand, would not fail to suggest, that passages had been accommodated to the, then, present belief of the nation, and that the whole might be a forgery, to introduce a belief, which some impostors of that nation had a mind to set up.

But, as the Jewish nation have ever rejected, and do still continue to reject, with the utmost horror and detestation, the belief of those truths, which their own

books are the chief evidence of, they are the most unexceptionable witnesses that the heart or head of the most scrupulous man could wish for; it being absolutely impossible that they can concur in any fraud or fiction for the support of that doctrine which they utterly abominate.

To reflect a little, then, on the evidence of this revelation: Here is a people chosen, in the loins, as one may say, of their parents, to be, as the Deity is pleased to declare, witnesses for him; formed into a very great and a very peculiar people; distinguished by particular institutions, and by the immediate hand of God kept distinct from all the nations of the earth; receiving, directly from God, revelations, institutions, predictive and emblematical, and many oracular declarations; preserved by the peculiar providence of God in possession of their land, and in the practice of those prophetic institutions for above 1500 years; believing that those predictions described an event, which was at hand, big with the greatest blessings to them, and to the whole universe, and looking out hourly for the accomplishment.

But, when that great event happens, this singular people, obstinately blind, refusing to see it, and rejecting the benefit of it; not by accident, but in pursuance of many predictions in their own sacred book; and thereby remaining the irreproachable witnesses of the truth of the sacred revelation, which from the beginning they were chosen to bear evidence of.

Nor is their continuing, with that qualification of witnesses, at this day, less marvellous, or less the immediate act of God, than their preservation in their land, before the advent of the Messiah, formerly was.

Who can with attention, and without prejudice, view the contrivance, the skill, the interposition of the finger of God, for so many ages, to provide, prepare, and preserve, so surprising, and so unexception-

able a proof for his revelation of grace to mankind, and at the same time suffer himself to doubt whether all this is not imposture, purely because God has been pleased to reveal some things that do not conform so well to his apprehensions; though he knows full well that his understanding is, almost in every thing, scanty and weak?

Who can doubt that, if God intended to reveal peace and mercy to mankind, he would make the evidence of that revelation strong and permanent?

And who can see the evidence, and believe, without adoring and determining to serve that beneficent Being, who has provided such evidence of his grace, for the comfort, direction, and encouragement of mankind, to pursue their duty, and to arrive at felicity?

Early we saw man undone, unless there was some hidden method in reserve with the Deity for abolishing his sin; and in a desperate state, if hope was not created, by revealing that method, which to man must naturally be unknown.

We saw, also, that mankind had hopes from the earliest times; that these hopes had in them some connection with the shedding of blood; and, from the universality of the hope of pardon on that principle, we concluded it highly probable that those hopes were given, and that mean pointed out by the Deity; both the one and the other being not only without any countenance from, but even, as some men have seemed to understand them, contrary to reason.

We saw, that, if these hopes, and the mean used, were from God, there must be some standing evidence, provided by the Deity, for producing in man belief in his mercy, and the just consequences of that belief.

And, now, we see, in fact, that such evidence is provided; which justifies the hopes and the practice

of the antient world, at the same time that it receives confirmation from them; and shews clearly that this Revelation was given from the beginning, and that the law of Moses is a republication of it.

This then being, undeniably, the case, how absurd and pernicious must the sentiments and conduct be of these unlearned, but conceited men, who, without examining nature or revelation carefully, presume to decide magisterially against revealed religion; and employ all the talents the bountiful God of nature has bestowed upon them, not to examine and inquire into, but to discredit and defeat the evidence that he has, with such infinite care, provided; and thereby harden themselves, and all such whose hearts and heads are turned like theirs, in false and impious notions?

Tindal (and all who have thought, before or after him, as he does) will have the law of nature, that is, the light of nature, a perfect rule for men's actions; and who doubts this? He says this light is absolutely sufficient to guide men in their conduct towards God, and towards one another; and this is no doubt also true. But, then he concludes, that this light of nature is, by itself, sufficient in our present state to lead us comfortably through this life to happiness in the next; but here he errs, manifestly, either from want of attention to truths which he admits, or from building on false principles which, without due examination, he has adopted.

That the light of nature, with the instructions the first man had, was sufficient to guide him before he sinned, is certain; and that the same light, after committing that sin, was a sufficient monitor against committing more, may also be true: but how was this first man to find out, that the first sin he committed was to be pardoned, if that God against whom he sinned, had not told him so much? Is

there any thing in nature to let a man know, certainly, that the infinite, the perfect, the immutable justice of God will pardon, connive, or wink at sin, the transgression of the eternal law of order, in setting up another sovereign, without some cause, motive or consideration, of infinite moment, to determine the Deity so to do? Or can nature find out that there was truly the interposition of such a cause?

Mr. Tindal would avoid this difficulty, by supposing that the light of nature teaches man that God is merciful, and that he will pardon, upon repentance, and a purpose of amendment: and, if this was true, his argument would go pretty far. But this is most certainly not true: the deist borrows, in this, an article from revealed religion, which, by ascribing to the light of nature, he would make use of to overthrow that very religion that discovered it.

The light of nature shews the God of nature to be bountiful, good, benign, clement, beneficent and merciful, if the idea is carried no further than a disposition not to hurt, and to relieve proper objects of relief: but the light of nature does in no way shew that this perfect Being is merciful to sinners, or that his clemency or beneficence can have for its object the offender against immutable justice. The ideas of indignation against sin, and punishment of trespass, are so necessarily joined with, and inseparable from the idea of infinite, perfect justice, that the light of nature, without destroying the idea of the essential justice of God, or without discovering what, without revelation, it could not discover, that justice was, by the interposition of an atonement of infinite consideration, to be satisfied, could not possibly frame to itself any notion that mercy was to take place, or that repentance, and purpose of amendment, were to be of any moment.

Revelation, indeed, has altered the case; it has described God as merciful; long-suffering, patient, and pardoning transgression, upon repentance: but, then, it has reconciled that discovery to the dictates of nature, which spoke just the reverse, by intimating that an atonement has, by infinite mercy, been found out to satisfy immutable, essential justice.

Thus do weak, presumptuous men mislead themselves, to lull their conscience, that glimpse of the light of nature, asleep; and, to prevent the trouble it must give them, they lay hold of a principle discovered, and proved, only, by revelation; but, because they would not be beholden to revelation for it, they boldly, and falsely, aver it is deducible from reason; and then make use of it to support an hypothesis, of their own framing, that shall overturn that revelation, from which the support to their hypothesis is sought.

Deism is not tenible without supposing remission of sin to be necessarily consequent upon repentance, and this to be discoverable by the light of nature. Remission does not appear from nature to be the consequence of repentance, but rather the contrary; the discovery and proof of this proposition is owing solely to revelation; and yet there are men, who would be thought wise and honest, who would be thought to believe the proposition, and yet make it the study of their lives to overthrow the evidence on which it is built.

It would be very happy if these gentlemen, who pique themselves so much on the study, the knowledge, the light of nature, entered a little more into the consideration of themselves, and of those things they so much pretend to know, and to admire; and bestowed but half the time they take to direct others, in finding out their own condition, and what they have to hope or fear: did they but look at their own case, they should be less wanton, less presumptuous.

What man is there, who, entering into himself, and comparing honestly what he now is with what man originally was, and ought to have continued, does not see the corruption, the misery, the helplessness of his own condition? If the depravity or violence of his appetites, his lusts, or his passions, have drawn him to commit any of the more notorious crimes that disturb society, or destroy his neighbour, conscience generally interposes, and the sting is felt, till the depraved wretch harden himself by some false excuse, or, by some other criminal pursuit, draw away his attention from the fore.

But, supposing a man, from the happy constitution with which he was born, from the advantage of a good education to form his sentiments, or from the kind conduct of God's providence, free from those grosser offences that fall under the censure and distaste of all honest men: can he recollect, that he is the creature of the infinitely perfect Being; that the great, the chief end of giving him all those intellectual faculties that distinguish him from the rest of the creation, was to contemplate the power, the wisdom, the goodness of God, in his works and in his providence, and to admire, adore, and serve this source of goodness, power, wisdom, and perfection; that his distinguishing felicity lay in pursuing his duty, in answering the ends for which those intellectual faculties were given; that a tribute of praise, of acknowledgment, and of thankfulness, is due to the God of nature, who has mercifully and beneficently framed the heart of man, so that the very act of paying this tribute is necessarily attended with the most perfect, pure joy, serenity and satisfaction, that the human mind is capable of feeling: I say, can he recollect these things, and at the same time be conscious that he seldom, if ever, employs the talents given him to the end for which they were given; that it is not the

occupation of his mind, or the joy of his heart, to contemplate or acknowledge the divine wisdom, and goodness; that the supreme good is not only not the object of the meditation of his mind, or of the pursuit of his heart, but that these faculties, and dispositions, bountifully given for those honourable and blessed ends, are monstrously misapplied to the pursuit of fleeting, perishing, if not wicked, pleasures; that the soul is so knit to, and bewitched with, those mean, unmanly, unreasonable enjoyments, which end in smoke, if not in sorrow, that there is no taste left for those sublime, permanent pleasures, for which it was created; and that, in place of using the very refuse of one's time, what is over and above the pursuit and enjoyment of those vain comforts, to the chief end for which time was indulged, the thought of the least communication with the Creator, is so painful, that all amusements, how foolish or insignificant forever, are anxiously sought after, to murder time, and to divert, as it is called, from that exercise of the soul, and heart, wherein consists his indispensable duty, and his highest felicity; without perceiving that he is guilty of high treason against the God of nature; that he is revolted from him, and has substituted in his place, and made choice of, his creatures for the object of his desires, and of his pursuits; that they are become his masters, who hold him in captivity; and he their slave, so chained to their drudgery, that he has no more capacity left to return to the enjoyment of his Maker, and to relish the pleasures that are with him for evermore; without dreading the just vengeance of the Omnipotent, which may reach him here, and must reach him, unless reconciliation intervene, in the life to come; whither, he knows, the pleasures and the amusements of this life cannot follow him?

Whoever makes these reflections, and every living soul must, who will enter into himself, and think seriously, can have no other question to exercise his mind with, but, What shall he do to be saved? And if any accident should bring to his ears that blessed piece of intelligence, that there is a way still open to the favour of God, and means provided for the pardon of sin, it is impossible the tidings should not rouse the whole of his attention, and employ the utmost of his diligence to discover the truth of so acceptable news; which, if found to be the very will and revelation of God, must meet with the most joyful and thankful acceptance.

But, if men will not look so far into themselves, as to see and feel their miserable condition; if they are so well contented with the pleasure they enjoy, or have in view, that they look for none other; or if their immersion in sensual satisfactions prevents their entertaining those honourable notions of the Deity, and of his service, that are contradictory to their present pursuits and scheme of life; it is no wonder they should not listen with attention to a piece of information, which, if true, breaks in upon their present happiness, sours all their pleasures, and promises, in exchange, an enjoyment for which they have no taste.

Men, so minded, cannot possibly receive the gospel, or fail to forge reasons against it; whilst those who sensibly feel the want, must with the greatest earnestness wish they may, upon due examination, find it true.

The gospel is an infallible cure, a glorious medicine, though of a bitter relish to many palates, for the most obstinate, the most dangerous disease: a medicine coveted, however, notwithstanding its harshness, and greedily swallowed by those who feel the anguish of the disease, or dread the danger; but nauseated and rejected by those who are sensible of no ailment,

and believe themselves to be in health. It is one of the hardest things in the world, to persuade madmen to come under the regimen necessary for their cure, because it is impossible to convince them they are mad: a madman, however, can by violence be compelled to the taking of medicine; but the gospel must be sought after, and taken voluntarily, and wishfully, before it can do any good.

The whole want no physician, and those who think themselves so, believe they want none: it is otherwise with the sick; who, in proportion as they feel agony, are impatient, and earnest for relief.

They begin at the wrong end, who, to persuade a deist to receive the gospel, attempt first to prove the excellence and infallibility of it: if he is satisfied he has no occasion for it, he cannot be brought to examine sufficiently, and to weigh the proof. Convince a man, who dislikes the only medicine that can cure him, that he is dangerously ill, he will hear you patiently on the subject of the remedy, and submit to make use of it, be it ever so unpalatable; if you cannot convince him that he stands in need of it, he is incurable.

As some men are so thoroughly corrupted, as to like the wretched state in which they are, better than that, in the possession whereof the highest felicity their nature is capable of consists; they are so weak, and at the same time so conceited, as to think they can persuade others, who do feel this misery, and pant after relief, that they are in perfect health, and want no remedy; and, by doing so, expose themselves to the pity, if not to the indignation, of those who are conscious of their own misery, and with joy hope for relief from means that these men endeavour to traduce, and abuse.

The whole of the deist's scheme is, as he imagines, built upon reason; and, so far as right reason

goes, the Christian agrees with him: but the difference between them is this, the deist maintains, that nothing is to be admitted but what he can assign a proper reason for, or, in other words, what falls in with the ideas which he has, or has made for himself: whereas the humble Christian believes that there are things of which he neither has, nor can have, adequate ideas; that things may be true, though he does not justly know how, or why, they are so; and that, for the reality and truth of such things as do not depend upon reason, or fall within his knowledge, he must depend upon such evidence as is sufficient to induce the belief of any matter of fact.

When one considers how little we know of matter, which we see, feel, and taste, and on which we have tried so many thousand experiments; how undeniably every system, forged by the wit and industry of the greatest geniuses, and believed for some time, has been overthrown by succeeding experiments; what amazing, nay seemingly contradictory effects the chymist every day sees produced in his laboratory, by very simple mixtures; and how certain we are, that hitherto we, from our reason, have discovered nothing of the first principles of motion, and that mechanism which supports ourselves and this system: when one recollects, that we know nothing at all of the nature of our own soul, and are incapable of framing any idea of it, or of any other spirit; and when one reflects how infinitely above our comprehension the Deity must be: it is impossible not to be astonished at the presumptuous folly of those men who would set up their knowledge for the standard, and test of every thing, divine and human; who by it would define the nature, and manner of existence, of the incomprehensible Deity; who by it would determine and regulate his views, his designs, his acti-

ons; and who by it take upon them to judge of the wisdom and justice of his designs and actions, contrary to what he has declared about them; though it is demonstratively certain, that they cannot be sure they know the causes of, or motives to, those designs or actions.

Ridiculous as this fond conceit of the sufficiency of reason and human knowledge is, infidelity finds in it one of its chief supports. Many facts are related, many things are revealed, that do not quadrate with the notions men have framed to themselves, which they call knowledge. Each of these creates an objection, which the objector taking to be unanswerable, does not give himself the trouble to look for an answer to; and the same weight is laid upon the point's being inconsistent with his notions, or not accountable for by his knowledge, as if it was a manifest contradiction to right reason; though every one must see the difference between a contradiction in terms, an absolute inconsistency in the thing itself, and an inconsistency between a thing, and the notions a man has framed on that subject, or even the incapacity of framing a distinct notion of the thing itself.

Vanity, selfishness, an affectation of gaining more knowledge than the Creator thought fit to allow, was the cause of the ruin of our first parents; and a false, presumptuous opinion, of the sufficiency and extent of the knowledge their descendents are possessed of, is the cause of their continuing in misery to this day: Preferring knowledge, in expectation, to the favour of God, undid the first rational creatures; setting up the opinion of knowledge, against the revealed will of God, fastens the calamity upon their unhappy children.

It is, however, surprising, that men, who are so fond of, and lay so much stress on knowledge, are not more careful to lay up a sufficient stock of it. A late noted

writer against Christianity gave himself the trouble to pick up so much Hebrew learning, as was, in his opinion, sufficient to call in question the application of a few particular passages of the Old Testament to the Messiah, and seemed to think that his labours had overthrown the whole evidence that arises from the Old Testament to support the New; without knowing what a little more learning, and unbiassed attention, would have shewed him; that the evidence does not depend on a few texts; that the whole system of the Jewish institution, every rite, ceremony, and sacrifice, was predictive; and that the chief scope of all the hymns and prophecies, was to explain and apply those predictions.

To frame a true notion of any thing, one must consider it altogether, and examine all the parts of it; a just idea can never be got of any object by viewing only scraps of it, and considering it by halves.

So fares it with revelation, and the evidence of it. No man who has considered the whole with due care, and has thereby framed a true idea of it, ever did, or ever will reject it; whereas he who will frame an opinion from a partial consideration only, can hardly fail to make a mistake.

It has been taken notice of, as an objection of vast consequence against the evidence drawn from the Old Testament to support the New, that all the promises and threats, to enforce obedience to the law, are every one temporal, relating to the goods and evils of this life, to the enjoyment or forfeiture of the land of Canaan, to prosperity or adversity in this world, without the least mixture of any consideration that relates to the life to come, and thence it has been concluded, that the Jews had no expectation given them of future happiness; that the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, found nothing to contradict them in

their sacred books ; and that a religion, so framed, could not be intended to introduce or lead to the Christian.

The observation which gives rise to the objection, is, undoubtedly true : the end of the whole of the Jewish institution, sacred and civil was, sufficiently to reveal, and preserve to future generations sufficient evidence of that revelation. The way chosen by the Deity to preserve the evidence was, to select a particular people ; to make them all witnesses of the miracles that demonstrate the certainty of the revelation ; to establish among them such observances, throughout all their generations, as should commemorate and predict ; to reduce his will into writing, for the greater certainty ; to give them the keeping of that writing ; to lay before them the strongest motives, that, as a people or nation, they were capable of ; to keep up unviolated these observances, and to preserve untouched his written will ; to promise to give, and to keep them in possession of the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey ; to engage to reside amongst them, and to direct and protect them from all harm, and to favour them with all national blessings ; and to threaten them with all national ills if they failed in keeping his law, that is, preserving the evidence of his revelation.

And, to make those motives the stronger, we see that the Deity was pleased to enter into a formal covenant with the whole people, as a people, which bound him to the performance of all these articles upon condition, however, that the people performed, on their part ; and bound the people, absolutely, to the keeping and observance of his law, with a formal submission to the threatenings and denunciations of ruin and destruction, if they failed in the performance of their part, to which they explicitly consented, by pro-

nouncing the curses against themselves if they disobeyed.

And, in fact, we observe that God performed, literally, his part of this agreement: with mighty power he introduced, and maintained, this people in possession of the promised land; he resided in the midst of them; he cherished them when they kept his law; and chastened them when they were remiss in his service: when their rulers, their princes, and nobles, sought after other gods, and slighted his service, the nation, as such, was delivered to slavery; when they returned in their hearts to their duty, they were restored to their land, and became again a nation: but when they nationally corrupted themselves, forgot the end of the law, framed to themselves unworthy notions about their God, his revelation, and salvation, which by the whole law was predicted, and carried their perverse imaginations so high, as to put to death, as a malefactor, the deliverer of mankind; then God executed the threats, to which the people by covenant had agreed; he dispersed and blinded them; and, by preserving them still under that dispersion and blindness, preserves the evidence of the revelation as strongly and clearly, as it was preserved by them whilst a nation, in possession of the promised land.

The covenant, then, with the people, was literal; all the promises annexed to the performance, on their part, were literal, and literally performed; the end the Deity had in making that covenant is obvious, and has manifestly been attained: but will it from thence follow, that the law, itself, with all the emblematical rites, ceremonies, and institutions, had no higher meaning, did not speak a language very intelligible to every individual Jew, who had a soul to be saved, and who, from those divine institutions, was to discover the will of God, and conceive hopes of

mercy and forgiveness; or that the observing and meditating on this law, so often recommended to every individual, was not necessary to lead them to the knowledge of God, and to the expectation of his favour, in a future state?

To satisfy one's self about this, no more is necessary than to look into the history, and the other sacred writings of the Jews; where the religious sentiments of inspired men, the declarations of the Deity, the professions, prayers, and confessions of the church, sufficiently shew what each individual was to see and believe, and what the wise and the devout did believe: comparing the law with these things, one has a key to decypher the typical institutions, and a certain explanation of all that it behoves us to know of the Mosaic institution; and it will evidently appear, that the Mosaic institution, which is no more than a republication of the revelation and institutions originally given to Adam, together with the accounts he gives of things, contain a full discovery of all that man was to know, and to believe, concerning God and himself, that was not discoverable by the light of nature, so much prized, and idolized, of late.

If one, from the reflections already made, is satisfied that the law of Moses is from God, and that the Jewish scriptures contain the revelation of the will of the Deity, recorded and preserved with such industry and evidence, not for the sake of the Jews, but for the sake of all mankind, he must look upon them as an inestimable treasure, stored with important truth; and cannot think any pains, bestowed in perusing and understanding them, lost; or any thing from them discovered, to be trivial or doubtful.

A Cypher is, in itself, obscure; make use of the key, it becomes intelligible; and, if by so doing it

becomes clear and intelligible, you are certain you have the right key.

The scriptural rites, institutions, and ceremonies, are emblematical, and therefore, in some degree, obscure; find out but a key, to explain the meaning of those emblems, that shall make all sense, and truth, and you are sure your key is a true one.

The antients recorded their sentiments, their actions, hieroglyphically, that is, emblematically, by figures of things animate or inanimate, expressive of their meaning; the key to, or dictionary, if one may so term it, of those emblems, is now lost; and, if it could be recovered, would certainly explain those Egyptian antiquities still preserved. To us that sort of writing is obscure; but it was not so to the Egyptians who made use of it: and it can with as little reason be imagined, that the emblematical religious service, instituted by God, was obscure, or not perfectly understood by those who were commanded to observe it, and for whose comfort and instruction it was established; on the contrary, it could not answer the end, if it was not plain and intelligible.

It has been already observed, that all men are not alike sagacious, and consequently not alike qualified, for discovering, and knowing, their misfortune, their duty, their felicity; and that the revelation of the will of God, to be perfect, must be such as should accommodate itself to all, and tend to lead all to their duty; a consequence whereof it is, that memorials should be established, even of things discoverable by the light of nature by the penetrating, for the use of the less clear-sighted, if reflection on those things was to be of universal use.

The scriptures are the most antient of all writings extant; the language in which they are wrote, is now no more, and has not for 2000 years been in common

use; and there is not a line of that language now in being, but what is contained in the sacred books.

Without the assistance of the Greek translation, and some other paraphrases, and helps from later languages, the Hebrew scriptures, though in our hands, would be altogether useless to us.

And therefore we must reverence the divine providence, that made the Babylonish captivity, and the dispersion that followed upon it, which drove multitudes of the Jews into foreign countries, where they forgot their own, and learned the prevailing, the Greek language, the instrument or occasion of procuring that translation, by which we can certainly decypher the Hebrew, and come at the perfect knowledge of almost all the scripture, at least of so much of it as is necessary for the great end God had in view, the evidence of the truth of the Revelation of his will to mankind.

As no other book comes near to the scripture, in point of antiquity, it is a disadvantage to us that we do not precisely know, further than we can collect from the sacred books, the customs, the manners, the sentiments, and common notions, that prevailed amongst men, at the date of the several transactions related; and are therefore at a loss to conceive, and distinctly to account for, the reason and meaning of several phrases, directions, and observances, whilst the antients, to whom those things were said or delivered, well knew what they meant, and for what end they were recorded. But though we do not know exactly why the thing was so phrased, or cannot tell, precisely, the immediate origin of the particular institution; yet, by comparing of texts, we can see evidently the general sense of the phrase, and collect the end of the institution, so far as the knowledge of the one or the other is necessary to the great design of God: and

therefore ought rather, with thankfulness, to acknowledge the goodness of God, who, through the midst of so many difficulties, has preserved to us all necessary knowledge, than repine at the loss of that which would tend chiefly to gratify curiosity.

The highest act of religious service in the Jewish church, and amongst all mankind, was sacrifice, which, though in observance as early as Adam, was nevertheless re-established by Moses, with many particular positive injunctions and many negative precepts; correcting abuses that had crept into that institution from the false notions of men.

It was common to all sorts of sacrifice, that the blood of the animal was spilt, and deemed of very high efficacy; and the whole body, or some part of it, that which was the most inflammable, the fat, and the inwards, was burnt with fire on the altar.

This blood is directed, carefully, and very early, to be obtained from; it is said to be the life of the animal; it is represented as what by the touch polluteth; and, at the same time, it is represented as the most sovereign purifier: by it the altar, the ark, the *sanctum sanctorum*, the tabernacle, the priest, were sanctified, were cleansed, were hallowed.

The burnt-offering is properly termed ascension, from the parts of it ascending in smoke by fire; the blood is said to atone, and the smoke to be of a sweet flavour, or a favour of rest to the Lord.

The party who offered, was to lay his hands upon the head of the victim sacrificed for sin, when it was to be killed.

And the very intent of the sin-offering was, to atone for the sin a man came to the knowledge of, and confessed.

The Deity, considered as the punisher of sin, and as in a state of anger and wrath against the guilty, is

always represented under the image of fire, a consuming devouring fire.

If God, then, to commemorate his declaration of mercy and pardon to mankind, and to preserve and encourage their hopes, through the intercession of a Saviour, who was to be slain and bruised for their sins, was pleased to direct, that an innocent animal, to represent the great Intercessor, should be slain, and that for the sins of him who brought it to the altar; that the blood of it should be shed, and sprinkled upon the altar, and poured out at the foot thereof; that the carcase, or at least the fat, the covering of the inwards, the most inflammable part of it, should be committed to the sacred fire, the emblem of the wrath of the Deity against him; and, being consumed, thereby should ascend towards the heavens in smoke, which smoke is represented as of a sweet savour, or savour of rest to Jehovah; and if man was told that this commemoration of the promised salvation was to atone for sin, and procure favour: how could there be any doubt in his mind, that the victim was only typical; that the virtue was really in the thing typified; that the blood that sanctified every thing, and atoned for sin, was not the blood of the victim; and that the smoke, ascending from the sacrifice consumed by fire, was emblematical only of something else that was to ascend, from the typified victim, to propitiate, and reconcile God to the sinner.

It cannot, with reason, be doubted that the merciful God, who instituted sacrifice for the comfort and instruction of mankind, communicated to him the end and meaning of the several appointments: and, being once discovered, the emblems are in themselves so expressive, and the taking them in the literal sense so absurd, that it is no small proof of the corruption of human nature, and the strength of giddy imagination, that they ever came to be mistaken, or misapplied.

In sacrifice, which was daily to be repeated as the highest act of devotion, man had the strongest memorandum of his fall; of the forfeiture thereby; of that life for which the blood, the life, of the victim was to be shed; of the anger of God which must have consumed him, if what was represented by the burnt-offering had not interposed; and of the excellency of the sacrifice typified, by whose oblation the Deity was placated and reconciled. Reflections on this symbolical act, and what clearly was intended by it, must put the mind in the most proper disposition for acknowledging, praying, and praising.

And, therefore, besides the daily, the weekly, the monthly, the yearly sacrifices, at stated times, it pleased the Deity to direct the iteration of the same symbolical act, whenever man, moved by reverence to the Deity, was desirous to approach the place he chose for his service, in order to pray, to praise, or to rejoice, in his mercy, or favour. His peace-offerings were to be offered with gladness; and, after the blood was shed, and the fat burnt upon the altar, the party who made the offering was to feast on the remainder with joy, in confidence of the favour of the Deity.

Nay, the perpetual obligation to abstain from blood, and the fat of animals, slain even for private use, was a constant memorandum, to such as could not attend the public service, of their forfeiture, and of their restoration.

And the necessary oblation of the first-fruits, and of samples of what the earth yields for our support, in the regular meat and drink offerings, were so many memorials of what was to be with, or in the great Sacrifice, that it is surprising the meaning should have been so much mistaken as, in time, it came to be.

That the same institution, not dependent on the publication of the law by Moses, reached all nations,

is evident from the antient and universal practice of all nations, with whom sacrificature was the highest act of devotion, thought sufficient to expiate sin, and to procure favour, and even fellowship with God.

The antients of all nations shed blood, and believed the virtue of it to be wonderful, witness their *taurobolia*, and their *criobolia*; burnt the fat, and sometimes the whole victim, on altars, with fire, and believed the smell grateful to the Deity; they offered first-fruits; they poured out libations; they burnt samples of the grain the earth afforded them; the salt of the covenant was not wanting; they vowed sacrifice, and returned thanks by sacrifice; and in their peace-offerings they feasted before their god on part of the victim, and rejoiced in his favour, and protection.

It is true, the greatest part of them, suffering their imaginations to mislead them, forgot the express prohibition not to eat blood; but still they retained the highest opinion of its efficacy. If they ate the blood of sacrifice, it was to render them more perfect, and more acceptable; and if, instead of sprinkling the altar, they besmeared their own bodies with blood, they gave thereby the stronger evidence of the merit and virtue they imagined was in the blood they made that use of.

Besides the victim, another main ingredient in sacrificature was the priest, the person directed by God to approach his altar, and to make the oblation and atonement in the name of Jehovah, for the party offering.

The priesthood, originally, resided with the first-born; with whom also, amongst the antient Heathens, resided the royalty.

In Israel God exchanged, formally, the first-born for the Levites, and took the Levites, in their room, for the service of the tabernacle.

Of the house of Levi, Aaron, the first-born, was to be high-priest, his sons were to serve under him in sacrifice, and the bulk of the Levites were for inferior service only.

This high-priest was to be perfect; he was to be consecrated with blood, and anointed with oil; he was to be pure from all spot; he was, whilst officiating, to be clothed with holy garments, all of linen; he had precious, and very particular robes and ornaments appointed for him. In the breast-plate of judgment he was to carry *Urim* and *Thummim*, light and perfection, by which God gave responses; on his heart, and on his shoulders, were the names of all the tribes of the people, engraved on a plate of pure gold, to be constantly, whilst officiating, worn; on his fore-head was the inscription, Holy, or holiness, to Jehovah. The plate, with this inscription, was said to be upon his fore-head, that he might bear the iniquities of the holy things, which the children of Israel should hallow, in all their gifts, and that they might be accepted. This priest was to sprinkle the blood; was to offer the burnt-offering; was to make atonement for sin, and reconcile; was to enter, with blood, once a-year within the vail, into the *sanctum sanctorum*, the emblem of the residence of the invisible God; was to sprinkle blood upon the mercy-seat; and was, when he came out, solemnly to bless the people.

Nothing can be more absurd, than to suppose that Aaron was holiness to Jehovah; that he was clean, and innocent; that he had in him light and perfection; that he supported the whole people of Israel; that he could effectually atone for, and intercede with God, for the people; or that he could enter into the real presence of Jehovah, and from thence bring a blessing to the people: and consequently no-

thing is plainer, than that, in all these particulars, Aaron was no more than a representative.

If Aaron was to represent a person pure and innocent, full of light and perfection, the holy One of Jehovah, who was to support, and have for ever on his heart, the people of God; who was to offer blood, effectual, for cleansing them from their sins; was thereby to atone, and make continual intercession for them; was to enter into the immediate presence of God, to propitiate for the people, and from thence to bless them: how could he do this otherwise than by washing his body with water, as the emblem of purity; by putting on white linen garments, as the emblem of innocence; by carrying *Urim* and *Thummim*, i. e. *light* and *perfection*, something by which the Deity manifested itself, about with him; by having the inscription of the *holy one of Jehovah* fastened to his fore-head; by having the names of the tribes of Israel on his heart, and on his shoulders; by sprinkling the blood for atonement; and offering the burnt-sacrifice, that yielded a favour of rest; and by entering in solemnity into the holy of holies, the emblem of the residence of the invisible God, there again to sprinkle blood, and from thence, formally, to bless the people?

In the merciful act of the Son of God for the salvation of mankind, there are two parts; the passive, if one may so speak, and the active; the victim bleeding and burnt represents the passive part: but then the great sacrifice was not compelled to suffer by the act of any one; the sinner did not offer it; the sacrifice voluntarily offered itself; by doing so, atoned, and continues active in making intercession perpetually *.

N. B. Amongst the Heathen, when a victim seemed reluctant, that was deemed a bad omen.

The victim bleeding, then, points out this passive part of the satisfaction; but the active part, that which claims, so necessarily, the acknowledgment, and adoration, of mankind, to that beneficent, blessed Being, that offered the atonement, and makes intercession, would not have been pointed out in this emblematical act, unless some thing, or person, to represent him, acting in that capacity, had been fixed upon; something adorned with the highest symbols of purity, sanctity, and perfection, offering and interceding for mankind; and who can fail to see these characters in the high-priest?

And therefore, as has been observed in the case of the victim, no one, who believes the institution divine, can doubt that the end and meaning of each particular was explained, when the observance was first appointed.

And whoever admits this, must also see that the original revelation was very clear, circumstantiate, and distinct; and that the memorials instituted for preserving the knowledge, then revealed, and maintaining the impression of it on the spirits of men, were very expressive and significative, and with great accuracy adjusted to the ways of thinking of those who recorded every thing intended to be known, by emblems, and symbolical representations; however, some of the particulars may not be now clear to us, who know not the proper meaning of some of their symbols.

The assumption of the Levites in place of the first-born, is, visibly, no older than Moses; but it seems very clear the first-born were, before that institution, in some sense, what Aaron wore on the plate of the mitre, Holy, or Holiness, to Jehovah; and were all, as representatives of the great Intercessor, entitled to shed blood, and exercise the priestly office, till the change was made, for very wise and just reasons.

No more is recorded of the first promise, than that *The seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent*: So that it does not appear, from this text, to have been originally declared that the Saviour was to proceed from a virgin.

And, if that had been declared, it would have been difficult to have found out any representation fit to express, and keep up the memory of it.

Besides, that the expectation of being the mother of that Saviour might have, with believing women, prevented marriage; as the same hopes promoted it among the Israelites, who looked for that seed, in the ordinary way; nay, prompted some women to unlawful actions with men of the line, who they supposed had the promise of the seed, as Lot's daughters, Tamar, the Midianitish woman, Bathsheba, &c.

But we find the expectation of the promised seed was confined to the first-born, that which opened the womb.

Primogeniture was reckoned after the mother; the first-born of a second wife was entitled to the rights attending it, in prejudice of the second son of a first wife, though born, in point of time, ever so long before him. *Vid.* 1 Chron. v. 1, 2.

And the right of *primogeniture* was confined to the male opening the womb; so that, if a daughter came first, the right ceased in the subsequent sons. It must have been for some very important end that God marked out this circumstance of the first-born, the first that opened the womb, with so extraordinary characters; that, as the first-born amongst men was to be holy to the Lord, and to officiate as priest, or intercessor, the first-born amongst beasts were also to be holy to the Lord; to be offered to him, if clean; if unclean, to be ransomed.

Who, then, can doubt that the prerogative of priesthood was annexed to the first-born, to keep in mind, and to point forth, that the great Intercessor

was to be a first-born; and that the first-born, in every family, were chosen for the priesthood, as so many types, or symbolical representations of him?

At the first peopling, and, afterwards, at the re-peopling of the earth, when men began to spread, and separate into new settlements, it was necessary to keep up the service of God, and the knowledge of his revelation, by the established symbols; to have a priest who could shed blood, and make atonement, in every family. And it seems certain every family had its priest, (the first-born), its holy things, and all the appurtenances of religious service.

When ambition joined many families into commonwealths, or kingdoms, and human prudence would make laws, this right of priesthood could not fail to come under some regulations, different from the original institution; though, for the first ages of the world, it remained still in the highest esteem.

When men, from their vain imaginations, began to mistake, or misinterpret the original revelation, and to devise new notions, and new services, for themselves, it became necessary to republish revelation, with all the marks of omnipotent power; and, to prevent mistakes for the future, it was fit to erect the Jewish state, as above hinted, and to give them the keeping of the law, and the observation of all the rites and ceremonies.

But, as this law could not possibly have been so accurately observed whilst the priesthood was executed, at large, by the first-born in every family, it pleased God to alter the original institution, and to make choice of one particular tribe for his service; and, out of that tribe, of the first-born and his descendants for ever to serve at the altar, and to represent the High First-born, the great Intercessor, in all the symbolical service that supported the knowledge, the faith, the hope of those that feared God.

And, in the very order for changing the institution, the knowledge of the original institution is preserved; the Levites are said to be taken in place of the first-born; and the regard for the first-born is still preserved, as holy to the Lord, by making it necessary to redeem them by an oblation; not to speak of the prerogatives still accruing to them by the Jewish civil constitution.

Though the Jewish law has a particular additional reason for the sanctity of the first-born, to commemorate the delivery of their first-born from the common calamity of the first-born in Egypt; yet, by the proceeding of God towards the Egyptian first-born, it is evident the notion of their importance was strong, before that event.

In the original message which Moses was to deliver from Jehovah to Pharaoh, Israel is called his first-born; and, if Pharaoh did not dismiss him, Jehovah was to slay Pharaoh's first-born; and the same Israel is, afterwards, called a nation of priests.

When Pharaoh, hardened by his vain heart, and doubtless prompted by the priests of those gods whom he served, refused to let the first-born, the priests of Jehovah, go, the threat was literally executed; all his first-born were slain, and the first-born of Israel were delivered.

If Egypt had any hopes from their first-born, the threat was severe, and the execution terrible; and we see it prevailed, above all the other judgments, for the deliverance of Israel.

And that Egypt had hopes from their first-born, is very likely, from what appears to have been the practice, and opinion, of their neighbours; who burned to Moloch, and sacrificed, on great exigencies, their first-born, in hopes of placating the offended Deity: whence could a practice so seemingly monstrous come, but from the first promise misunderstood?

Esau's selling his birth-right, the infamous character that brought him, the seemingly extraordinary steps his mother took, (when it is not observed that she was directed by the oracle), and the loss of the blessing consequent upon it, sufficiently shew the high esteem of *primogeniture*, before the days of Pharaoh. And, indeed, the parting so cheap with a privilege so high, as representing the Intercessor between God and man, gives a very vile idea of Esau; if one can help calling him a free-thinker, which he could hardly be, considering his concern for the blessing.

That priesthood and *primogeniture* went, antiently, together, we gather from prophane history :

Rex, Anius idem, Phœbique sacerdos.

The Lacedemonian kings were both priests and kings, because it could not be decided which was first-born; and almost all the antient kings sacrificed.

Whatever corruptions imagination introduced in religion, the priesthood was ever held in great honour. The original institution was strangely depraved in the Roman state, but still the priesthood continued to enjoy, at least its antient titles; the term of *Rex sacrorum*, *Rex sacrificulus*, went down through the Roman commonwealth, where the title of *Rex* was abominated. And the Roman emperors, notwithstanding their ignorance, and vanity of aspiring after deification for themselves, yet affected the title of *Pontifex Maximus*, as an honour, and a security to their government.

The religious regard for sacrificature, and the reverence for the priesthood, must have been stamped deep upon the minds of men, by a very extraordinary authority; else they could not have endured for so many generations, and amongst nations so little conversant with each other.

Though Rome, and the Greek commonwealths, established on levelling principles, seem to have forgot that any prerogative at all was due to *primogeniture*; yet it was not so with more northern nations, whose notions were less corrupted with imaginations. The Goths, the Franks, and the other people called barbarians, who overthrew the Roman empire, preserved continually a regard for it, and have left large prerogatives attending upon it over all Europe.

As the original revelation, for the preservation whereof those rites, ceremonies, and observances, were instituted, discovered to man in the ordinance of sacrificature, the chief foundation of his faith, and hope; so, it is evident from other rites, observances, and symbols or emblems, constantly observed, and preserved, that from the beginning man was taught his duty, what he was to do with respect to, and what he was to believe concerning the Deity.

Of this the universal practice of ablution, or washing with water, is an instance which, from the earliest times, has taken place over the whole known world.

The Israelites, before they received the law, were to wash themselves when they were to approach the presence of God; all nations had their lustrations, by sprinkling of water; the high-priest, and his sons, were to wash their flesh, as often as they went about any part of the sacred work; and the children of Israel, upon any uncleanness, were to wash with water, in many cases, with particular ceremonies.

Touching any filth, or nastiness, a dead carcase of any kind, the fore or issue of man, or woman, were said to pollute, were sufficient to debar the party from appearing before the Lord, who is described as abominating every thing that is unclean; and ablution, with certain other observances, were sufficient

to put an end to that uncleanness, and to admit to the service of God.

No man, in his senses, can think that the external uncleanness of any person, in the literal sense, or the imputed uncleanness, as one may say, by the touch of an unclean thing, could be offensive to God; much less that washing with water, considered as an external act only, could remove any real, internal uncleanness; and therefore it is impossible to doubt that both the one and the other signified something more than is in the letter expressed.

Though, by the light of nature, we can discover that this creation had an Author, eternal, infinitely perfect, and, particularly, infinitely just, good, wise, and intelligent; yet we, who can frame to ourselves no adequate idea of our own souls, and who know nothing about them, but the little we collect from what we feel transacting in ourselves, ought not to be surpris'd, that, without revelation, we can frame to ourselves no just notion of the invisible God; but ought rather to be amazed at the impudence of those who pretend to decide what God is, or is not, and what he can, or cannot do, from the notions they have framed to themselves of his attributes, nature, and perfection.

The first hint we have in the sacred book that can help us to any notion of the Deity, is, that man was fram'd in his likeness, and according to his image; from whence we may not only collect the intelligence of the Deity, which nature sufficiently discovers, but also inclinations, or dispositions, in the divine mind, to which those in the mind of man, in the state of perfection, were something similar.

Disliking, hatred, anger; liking, pleasure in the actings of creatures, love, jealousy, inclination restrained, compassion and concern, are affections which the wise men of this world hold the Deity in-

capable of, they look so like passions that cannot touch a being infinitely perfect, and essentially happy; and in this reasoning they agree with Epicurus, who rejected all providence, touching the things of this world, because he looked upon the care it presupposed to be troublesome to the Deity.

But revelation differs from these wise men. It describes the Deity as possessed of affections, and inclinations, similar to those that a perfect man may feel in himself, and something still higher and peculiar to God: detestation, hatred and abhorrence, of sin; anger, and wrath against the sinner, as such; compassion towards the miserable, and concern; desire, though sometimes without success, to save, and to reform; love to those that do well, satisfaction in their well-doing; pleasure in the acknowledgments, and praises, of those benefited, and attention to their requests; as well as jealousy, and indignation, at the setting up any rival for acknowledgment and praise.

Now, if any man will give himself leave to consider to what purpose God displayed so much wisdom, power, and goodness, in the formation, and preservation of this whole material system, of man, and of all other living creatures; to what purpose man had discerning and reason given him; to what purpose he had the ideas, and the law of right and wrong, imprinted on his mind; and to what purpose he had in his heart planted a disposition to admire, to adore, to reverence, to acknowledge, to thank, and to praise; he cannot long be in suspense between revelation and imagination, but must assent to the truth of what the Deity has revealed.

Did God exert infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, in the creation of this world; did he give man eyes, and understanding, to see that wisdom, power, and goodness, and a heart disposed to admire, adore, and praise; and will it nevertheless be said, that this

admiration, adoration, and praise, is indifferent to him? must it not, necessarily be concluded, that these things are well-pleasing to the Deity, and that the man who yields them is acceptable to him, stands in his favour, and good-will, and may be considered as beloved of him? and must it not, with equal certainty, be concluded, that the man who refuses to answer the end of his creation; who neglects to pay God that adoration, praise, and service, that is due; who fixes his heart on the creature, in place of the Creator; and who gratifies those lusts, and pursuits he has set up in the room of God, at the expence of breaking the laws of right and wrong, implanted in his breast, is disagreeable to God, the object of his anger, and indignation; and that his sinful, treasonable actions are offensive to that Being that delights in right, in harmony, and in order?

Philosophers may puzzle themselves, and others, with reasoning, from abstract notions which they have framed to themselves, as they think fit; they possibly may not see how a Being, infinitely and essentially perfect and happy, can admit of accession to, or diminution from that happiness: but their not being able perfectly to comprehend how this is so, will be no good reason to disbelieve what the Deity declares concerning himself: or to persuade that God is not pleased with the doing of his will, and displeased at doing the contrary.

And, if we can bring ourselves up to believe, that the infinitely perfect Spirit, is pleased, and affected, with the rectitude of the spirits of men, with the sentiments therein framed, and with the joy and gratitude that flows thence, in expressions of praise, acknowledgment, and adoration, we shall have small ground to doubt (what the Deity formally reveals) that his spirit acts reciprocally on men, that it en-

lightens, enlivens, and encourages them towards their duty, and felicity.

Nor is the cessation of miracles, for some centuries; or the observation, that nature follows, in all things falling under our cognizance, a settled, fixed, mechanical course, pursuant to certain established rules, any ground to doubt of the communication between the infinite Spirit, and the spirits of men, which the scripture says, is and ever has been open. The godly disposition, the religious actings, of the soul, operate, as one may say, mechanically upon the Deity, producing satisfaction and complacency; and that, again, acts reciprocally upon the soul, by that sort of mechanism, or manner of operation, by which spirit operates on spirit. Were the case not so, God would not have been delighted with prayers, and praises; he would not have commanded and encouraged them; and the duty of man, in the religious acts of the heart, instead of being a blessing and enjoyment, would be a burthen to him.

We are so well acquainted with the perturbations, the transports, the ruffles, that pleasures and passions produce in ourselves, that we are unwilling to allow any such affections in the Deity: but why must affections and inclinations produce such disturbances in the Deity as they do in us? May not God detest sin, dislike the sinner, and even destroy him, without being ruffled, or suffering his essential happiness to be impaired? May he not have affections and inclinations like to ours, without those inconveniencies that, in our weak frame, attend them?

God cannot be desirous, says a Reasoner, that any thing should happen, and yet that thing not happen; because, if he were truly desirous, his omnipotence would infallibly effect it. But, then, the Reasoner does not consider, that this desire is only spoken of the disposition, the inclination, of the Deity, and not

of any formal act of the will. The inclination, the disposition, may lie strongly one way, and yet there may be insuperable obstacles that hinder to will what the mind inclines to.

A prince may have the strongest inclination to pardon an offender convicted, suppose his favourite son, guilty of a crime of the highest nature, and most dangerous example, and yet reasons of justice and polity may determine his will not to follow that inclination. In the same way, why may not the Deity be desirous, and even solicitous, that a thing may happen, which, because of higher considerations, he cannot interpose in, that is, cannot formally and absolutely will should happen.

These reflections, and many more of the same kind, that must occur on reading the scriptures, leave it very plain, that the language of that book, which describes the Deity's actings, affections, and inclinations, in terms borrowed from the usage, the sentiments and resolutions of men, is not so figurative as it is generally supposed to be; and that we ought to understand it something more literally than reasoners are willing to allow.

In every page of the sacred book God inculcates his aversion to, and abhorrence of sin, and his detestation of sinners.

To give men some notion of this aversion, and dislike, he borrows that idea of loathing and abhorrence that men feel on the sight, or touch, of any nasty, unclean, loathsome object.

God represents himself *holy, pure, undefiled, separated from sinners, of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity.*

He represents sin as uncleanness, pollution, loathsomeness, in the highest degree; and similitudes are taken from many vile, impure, abominable things to describe it.

And he represents the sinner, as polluted by sin, unclean, and therefore abhorred, and incapable to approach his purity, in that unclean state.

But, then, as this picture, by itself, would be fit only to distract, and drive the sinner to despair; he, at the same time, represents a possibility of wiping away this pollution, and washing the sinner clean, by means very natural, and very easy to be come at.

To the end, therefore, that this image should be the more strongly impressed on men's minds, and the picture come the more frequently before their eyes, it pleased God, at the first revelation of his will, and institution of religious ceremonies and services, to direct a total abstinence from the touch of every thing that was, either in itself, or in the apprehension of mankind, unclean, foul, or loathsome.

It pleased God, also, to command the abstaining from several things that do not seem, in their own nature, to be unclean or loathsome; and to declare that, by the very contact of such things, men became impure, were unclean, and abominable in the eyes of God; and therefore could not be admitted into his holy presence, or to any religious act.

But this impurity was to be purged away by ablution, or asperision, according to the prescription in the several cases: when the party was washed in water, and purified, he might present himself before God; but if, knowing his uncleanness, he mixed in the service of God without being purified, the offence was capital, he was to be cut off from his people.

This constitution must, necessarily, produce the greatest nicety and care to preserve cleanliness, in those who put any value on the favour and service of God.

And, if they were not so stupid as to look only to the letter, the external act, it must for ever keep in their view the purity and holiness of God; the ugly-

ness and deformity of sin, the abhorrence God had of it, and of the sinner, the necessity of avoiding it, if one would have any communication with the Deity; and the mercy and goodness of God in providing a purification to cleanse from it, such as could as easily be come at as common water, and was as effectual to remove the filth of sin, as water was for common nastiness.

The whole of this institution, which was as ancient and universal as sacrifice, is obviously symbolical and instructive; and, if the real meaning of it was lost, if men began to think there was any real impurity in the touch of a dead carcase, or any real virtue, to purge sin, in water, it must be evidence of their utter degeneracy, blindness and corruption.

Perhaps, things not really impure, were to be avoided as such, to create the greater circumspection, and to bring the instruction oftener in view.

It is not reasonable to think, that God should enjoin, or prohibit, in matters of religion, any thing in itself absolutely indifferent, under severe penalties, purely to be a test of obedience.

But it is reasonable to think, that a thing in itself indifferent may be commanded, to keep up the memory of any fact, or precept, to impart knowledge, and preserve instruction.

Abstaining from the altar after any external pollution, could not possibly have been enjoined, under the pain of death, but for the important lesson it was intended to teach, of the holiness of God, and the purity of heart necessary to those that would approach him.

Eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, would not have been prohibited, but to warn our first parents against the ambitious desire of knowing more than came to their share, and the presumptuous conceit of relying on their own knowledge, and

following their own imaginations, which destroyed them, and continues to mislead and undo multitudes of their weak, vain descendents.

That species of infidels that glories in the title of free-thinkers, who set up their own knowledge and understanding against the revelation of God, split upon the same rock on which our first parents shipwrecked, notwithstanding the beacon that has been fixed on it from the creation of the world.

Circumcision may have served for a mark of distinction to the Israelites, because it was not practised by their neighbours in Canaan, though it was by the other descendents of Abraham and Isaac, Ishmael and Esau: but it had undoubtedly a higher meaning, and probably an origin earlier than the days of Abraham.

That it had a higher meaning, is certain from the frequent declarations that a circumcised heart, a heart cut off and separated from all unruly lusts, and affections, is what God delights in.

And that it had an earlier origin, seems to be very evident, from the early observance of that institution, amongst many nations who cannot be believed to have received it from Abraham, or his descendents.

Men may dream, but it is impossible to persuade one that has his eyes open, and who reflects on the bitter animosities that must have been between the Egyptians and the Israelites, the high contempt the former must have entertained of the latter, the vanity and tenaciousness of the priests of Egypt with respect to the mysteries of their religion, and the impiety and abomination which the religious service of the Israelites appeared to them to be stuffed with, that the Egyptian priests (and they, principally, were in the earliest times circumcised) would have submitted to follow the despised, detested Israelites in a bloody

practice of this kind, and would have transmitted it, as sacred, to their descendants.

And, indeed, if it had been meant only for a sign of distinction for Israel, it ought not to have descended to Ishmael, and Esau, but ought to have been confined to the twelve tribes.

It may, reasonably, therefore be looked on as one of the original institutions appointed just after the fall, which though retained here and there, particularly in Egypt, had nevertheless been left off in Abraham's country, where idolatry began to prevail; and was therefore renewed to Abraham, when he was selected, from his depraved country, to be the father of a people to whom the original revelation should be republished, and who were to become the keepers of the oracles of God.

Taking, this then, to be the case, and recollecting that Eve proved the tempter to Adam, that love to her, who had forfeited by eating, prevailed with him to follow her fate; that inclination to women is the most fierce, the most ungovernable of the desires and lusts of men; and that it was fit to establish some very sensible memorial of the offence at the fall, that should carry instruction along with it, to curb and bridle noxious desires: who can help concluding, that circumcision was appointed to fix a permanent mark on that part of the body, the gratification of the lust whereof, had so great a share in the seduction of mankind; and thereby to admonish against all lusts and carnal gratifications, and to advise and instruct men to cut off all sensual desires, and to wean themselves from them?

Lying carnally with woman, even with a man's own wife, than which nothing is more natural, or more innocent, is, in the eye of the law, a pollution, and required ablution, before the party could be admitted to the presence of God. Why? to prevent

the setting too high a value on it; to check the too fond desire and pursuit of it; and to shew that such desires, encouraged, are inconsistent with that purity of heart that is required in the service of God, who claims possession of the whole heart, and will not admit of rivals. And, if this is the undeniable meaning of that prohibition, it is easy to see the sense of the symbolical act of cutting off, and flinging away, the foreskin of the flesh; than which nothing can be a more proper emblem of forward, fierce, fleshly appetites, and sensual delights.

Though circumcision might have been given to Israel, as a mark to distinguish them from the other adjacent nations surrounding Canaan, and was by them to be considered as a mark of the covenant between them and God; yet that does not say that the original intention, and emblematical use of it, was to be dropt, or lost; on the contrary, it is evident, from the frequent allusions plainly made to the symbolical sense of it by the inspired writers, that it was still kept in view, and principally to be observed, by Israel.

And, in like manner, many of the institutions, which were in practice antiently, seem to be applied to particular actions or events which were near the time of the renewal of those institutions in the Jewish law. But it does not follow from these applications, that the original institutions, or the sense and meaning of them, were to be dropt or lost. In an earthly affair, each Israelite, when he entered upon lands in Canaan, was to bring a basket of fruit, and make a confession why he performed that action: which proves that those symbolical acts had a formal meaning; and suggests that there may have been original, formal confessions, acknowledgments, and prayers, attending the acts of religion or devotion; though, not being recorded, otherwise than in general, that once all the earth had one confession, the particular

forms have not descended to us, with sufficient evidence.

Nothing is more unjust than the suggestion, that the observation of the Sabbath, or seventh day, was to take place only amongst the Israelites.

If the scriptures are to be the rule, the Sabbath had its origin immediately upon the creation, and before the fall. God is said to have rested on the seventh day from his work, and to have hallowed the Sabbath day, on which it was criminal, nay capital, to do any work.

If the antient profane writers are to be searched, the Sabbath will be found so antient, that it could not possibly have been derived from the Jewish law. For, not to take notice of the frequent mention to be met with of Sabbaths, and days of rest, which might have been borrowed from Jewish customs, it is certain that the most antient Greeks, and the more antient Egyptians, divided the time by hebdomades, a circle or revolution of seven days, to each of which they gave the name of some planet, except the seventh, which they dedicated to the sovereign of all the heavenly luminaries, the sun; and this cycle being no proper, constituent part of the moon, month, or year, must necessarily have flowed from institution: nor could any thing be a more proper, permanent memorial of the creation, than the appointing the observation of the seventh day; at the same time that, debarring man from work, it sequestred him to the contemplation of the creation, and its Creator, of formation, and its Former, and allowed his soul time to entertain itself with objects peculiarly fitted for it.

If every seventh day man was to be stopped in his career, in pursuit of low, earthly comforts, by a holy rest which it was capital to profane by labour; if he was to observe this rest, week after week, in memory of God's having rested the seventh day, after having

finished the creation in six: no mean could be devised more likely to keep up the memory of the creation, and to banish the extravagant imagination that the world was eternal; and no institution could lead more necessarily, and directly, to employ man, at least one seventh part of his time, in those speculations that tend to keep up communication between the soul and the Deity, and preserve the memory and knowledge of the revelation of God to man; nor could man have been guilty of a more fatal piece of perverseness than to discontinue and leave off the observance, which, in all appearance, drew along with it the loss of the true sense and meaning of all the other institutions. It is one of the reproaches the most insisted on against the backsliding Israelites, that they neglected the Sabbaths of the Lord.

In the whole of the primitive religious service, there is not any circumstance casual; every particular, every gesture is instructive.

In the presence of God, man fell upon his face to the ground; and, by that act, humbly confessed his original: hence, bowing to the ground is the formal word for worshipping, which it was high treason to practise toward any idol. And when from that posture, man raised himself to praise, and to bless God, he raised himself no farther than the knee, still so far retaining the posture of humility; and from this posture the word to signify blessing is taken; as bowing to the ground is used to signify worshipping, kneeling is used to signify blessing.

If the original revelation was compleat, man must have been told that the Deity was to descend to this earth, to dwell there amongst men, and to instruct by precept and example.

If this was originally revealed, it must have been recorded, by appointing some symbolical observance, some emblematical representation.

Accordingly, in the republication of the law to the Israelites, the appointment the most remarkable was, to erect, first a tabernacle, and then a temple, for the reception of the presence of the Deity; who made repeated declarations, that he was to dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, that he was to reside, in the tabernacle first, and then in the house that was to be built for him, and was more particularly to reside between the cherubims.

And, the tabernacle first, and then the temple, having been built, a cloud, the glory of the Lord, or the symbol of his presence, filled these mansions, and the Deity from thence gave responses, and directions, and pronounced judgments.

In the sacred writings there are many formal intimations that this institution, and dispensation, amongst the Jews, was typical, and predictive that the real Glory of the Lord was to come to the temple; that the temple, the symbol of his mansion, was to be destroyed; and that the figurative, the emblematical service, and institution, was to cease, and to give way to the real presence, and spiritual instruction of the Deity.

And, indeed, by the cessation of all that service, and by the destruction of the temple, immediately after the Lord who was expected came to it, we evidently see the institution could have been to no other end but to create, and keep up, that expectation.

But, if we look a little farther back, we shall see the belief of God's residence among men, and the practice of building tabernacles, and houses or temples, for that residence, much earlier than the republication of the law from Sinai.

Most of the antient nations had temples, dedicated, for the supposed residence of their gods. The Philistines had a house for Dagon, before the Israelites had any for Jehovah; and many cities in Canaan are

named from the temples of the deities worshipped by the inhabitants.

Jacob promised to make the stone which he anointed at Luz, Beth-el, the house of God: and he was as good as his word; for, some years after, he there built an altar, and sacrificed.

The Israelites, upon their going out of Egypt, before the Mosaic tabernacle was built, had a tabernacle in which they believed the presence of God to be, and in which the pot of manna, &c. was laid up.

The idolaters, who came up amongst the Israelites, are reproached with having carried in the wilderness the tabernacles of their gods, whilst the living God was so miraculously feeding, and protecting them.

This practice, which could not possibly have come from the law of Moses, but which the law of Moses, as well as the usage of Jacob, and of the Israelites, shews to have been approved of by God, must necessarily have flowed from divine institution, as early as the original revelation; and was perfectly well calculated to keep in mind the original intimation, that God was to humble himself so far as to descend to dwell amongst men, and to create a constant expectation of that event.

And, as we have already observed on other occasions, if this practice had not had some very authentic institution for its original, it is scarce possible it ever should have universally obtained; nothing being more contradictory to the common notions which the light of nature could afford, than the belief that the immaterial, incomprehensible Being, should dwell in houses made by hands, and sojourn with such groveling creatures as man. The universal practice, then, in this instance, is strong evidence that it does not depend upon human invention. Imagination, indeed, would mislead from the intention of the institution, and would graft many impertinencies on it,

whenever the real design was mistaken; but there is hardly any example of an observance, so seemingly unnatural as this, if universal, that cannot be traced up to a divine original, at least to some divine intimation, or institution, that gave occasion to it.

As the institution we are now upon, was of a very high nature, and important to be observed, and relied on, it is extremely probable that the Deity, to devout men, (for to such, we know from scripture, God was pleased to reveal himself) thought fit to give particular proofs of his presence in the house, tabernacle, or place appointed for his residence. He spoke to Moses from the tabernacle of the congregation, before the Mosaic tabernacle was erected: and if those temples, or tabernacles, were so honoured on particular occasions, we may cease to wonder why the Gentiles took up the belief of oracular responses from their deities, (which, again, is a conceit they hardly could have taken up without precedent). Knowing that the true God revealed his will to his true servants, in those places which he authorised to be set aside as for his presence, and believing their false gods true, and themselves acceptable servants, they naturally would expect such communications; and their imaginations might impose on them, or make their belief an easy prey to any impostor, any priest of a false god, who should have courage and cunning enough to frame a lie.

When we see an observance has, universally, prevailed amongst the Heathens, which is afterwards approved of by the law of Moses, we justly conclude it sprung from divine authority.

When we see customs, obtaining among the early Heathens, which are prohibited by the law, we may safely conclude that those customs were not of divine institution, but were derived either from some lauda-

ble, pious practice of the believing patriarchs, which had been abused, or from imagination.

Thus we see the respect among the earliest Syrian and Greek heathens for *Baitulia*, stones which were set up on end, anointed, and believed to be sacred, and in process of time transferred to their temples, and revered as statues of their gods.

And we cannot avoid seeing the practice of consecrating, as we say, a stone by Jacob, when, upon the manifestation of the Deity, he set it up, poured oil upon it, vowed a vow, and said it should be *Beth-el*, the house of God.

But, however, that devout act, that solemn memorial of Jacob's vow, and of the merciful appearance to him, might have been acceptable to God; and however such things might have been religiously, and acceptably, done by other pious men, before and after him; yet we see the practice is in the law prohibited, perhaps because of its being liable to abuse, and because of the corruptions it had already introduced.

We see, also, that the patriarchs shewed particular, sacred respect to some sort of trees. The oaks of Mamre were, in some degree, sacred to Abraham. It is not impossible they might have made some species of trees memorials, to the end they might think on the thing such tree represented, so often as the tree came in their view. Abraham planted a grove, or tree, at Beersheba, and called there on the name of Jehovah, the everlasting God. Many of these emblematical trees, put together, might form groves; and we do know that groves were amongst the most antient places of worship, amongst the nations; and that particular sorts of trees were held sacred to certain deities, amongst those that had forgot, or rather misapplied, the service of the true God.

These observances continued to be revered as late as Homer: Hector wishes for a stone, or an oak-

tree, from whence he might with safety speak to Achilles; and *loqui a quercu* is, in the language of the old Italians, to speak with safety.

Amongst the things which were abused, and, by the renewal or Jewish institution, were prohibited, ordered to be discontinued, cut down, and destroyed, the Jews have taken in sacred trees, or groves: but, it appears, the word which they construe groves, signifies images of Venus, or &c. and it appears that they used sacred trees, and groves, to the last.

There is another instance of the same kind, in the case of what we translate ornaments. The original notion of the word carries in it the idea of witnessing, testifying, &c. and some passages of the scriptures seem to point at a very surprising regard shewed by the Deity to those ornaments. After the defection in making the golden calf, God commands the people, by Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 4, 5, 6. to put off their ornaments from them, that he might know what to do unto them. And the people put off their ornaments, and mourned. We cannot doubt, then, that the people looked upon those ornaments as defences against any sudden mischiefs, or unlucky casualties; and that this opinion had some authority from the conduct of the Deity, in providence, and from the practice of godly men, if not even from divine institution; and to this early observance are owing all the *Amulets*, all the *Talismans*, the *Annuli*, amongst the antients, which they looked upon as averruncating of evil, and as so many defences and preservatives from harm.

Though we know nothing of the ornaments of the Israelites, yet, looking upon the antient *Talismans*, the *Abraxas*, the *Annuli*, and other gems, that are still preserved, which are full of inscriptions, and hieroglyphical figures, of which we can make no certain sense, at this day; we may naturally conclude, that

the earliest ornaments, which had the virtue the latter were only supposed to have, were formed somewhat in the same way; and that the hieroglyphical figures, with which they were charged, represented some sacred discoveries, or promises, worn on certain parts of the body, to be perpetual memorandums of the propositions expressed in those emblems.

And, accordingly, when the law was given, by Moses, in writing, in the room of that preserved, formerly, by hieroglyphics, we see injunctions that the people should wear the law, or parts of it, as signs upon their hands, and for frontlets between their eyes, Deut. vi. 8. which the later Jews understanding literally, wrote passages, as they conceived the most remarkable, of the law on vellum, which they rolled up in phylacteries, and wore on their arms, and foreheads, with a superstitious regard, in the days of Christ; and it is for the ostentatious, hypocritical use of them, *making broad their phylacteries*, the Pharisees are reproved, Matth. xxiii. 5. and not for their being at all used, as some suppose; which shews that the wearing those signs and frontlets was literally, and not in a figurative sense only, enjoined.

If we observe the passages of the law of Moses, in which the wearing those signs and frontlets is recommended, we shall find them exceeding important; and that the intent of the recommendation is, to keep, for ever, and attentively, in memory, the particular transaction or declaration to which they relate, by way of evidence that such a transaction happened, or such a declaration was made; and in this light they agree with the sense of the word we translate ornaments, which implies, bearing evidence, testifying: and, if the meaning of this later institution was to inculcate, by written memorandums, the important passages of the law, or the Jewish oeconomy, it is very natural to think that the end of those hiero-

glyphical ornaments, in use before the written law, was of the same nature, to present frequently to men's view the most signal articles of the original revelation.

Men who have not sufficiently inquired, may make it an objection to the goodness of God, with an intent to impeach the truth of the Christian religion, that the world, on the supposition of the Christian scheme, was suffered to lie so long in darkness; that the Judaic religion was confined, and hidden, in mysteries; and that the Christian religion came too late, and attended with too slender evidence: but, after giving due attention to these hints, they must confess the original publication of the revealed will of God full, and perfect; that instructive lessons were conveyed in every rite, ceremony, observance and institution; that the strongest memorials were established of what was declared, was to be believed, and hoped for; that perpetual memorandums were appointed for bringing into men's minds their duty, and strengthening their belief, and their hopes; and that this knowledge, those institutions, and these hopes, reached over the bulk of mankind, before the renewal of the law to Israel; though mankind so corrupted themselves, so cooled and slackened in their duty, and pursued so wantonly, and presumptuously, their own imaginations, as to have lost almost all the knowledge of the things revealed, and of the end and design of the institutions; and to have preserved no more than some great lines of external observances; which serve at this day for evidence only, that there was a very early revelation of the will of God to mankind, joined with hopes of mercy; but do not shew what the particulars were of that revelation, which can be gathered, only, from considering the sacred institution, as it is delivered, completely, in the law, explained by the prophets, and perfected by the gospel.

But, after all, though in the institutions already referred to, one may see, very distinctly, almost all the articles of the Christian faith, and hope; yet, if the original revelation went no farther, it must be owned there are some great points wanting, something disclosed in the gospel, relating to the Deity, that the declarations and institutions, hitherto mentioned, do not extend to, and that the light of nature, by itself, could not discover.

The gospel informs, precisely and formally, that though the Godhead is essentially one, yet there are in the divine essence three persons, equal in perfection, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; that the Son, to satisfy essential justice, took on him flesh, was united to the humanity, suffered for sinners, made atonement for them, raised the Man, to whom he was joined, from the dead, glorified him with himself, and is to make continual intercession for sinners; and that the Holy Spirit, upon the ascension of the Son of God, was sent to instruct, to comfort, and, as one may say, to inspire all who, believing in Jesus Christ, should endeavour to do their duty, to serve, and to glorify God.

That this is true, every Christian believes; and whoever does so, feels the expediency of being acquainted with it, as it exalts his sentiments of the wisdom, the justice, the mercy, the goodness, the love, of God; and lets him know how to place his acknowledgments, his service, his adoration, at the same time that it cautions him against those sins and abuses that can be washed away no other ways than by the blood of the Son of God.

And, as this is true, and highly necessary to be known, it would not be of a piece with the rest of the tenor of the goodness and condescension of the Deity, if, in the original revelation of grace, this was not also intimated to mankind, however the perversi-

ty and presumption of human imagination, and invention, may have confounded, and thereby, in a great measure, have lost the memorials instituted for preserving this revelation.

It will be granted by every Free-thinker, because it is the foundation of his own belief, or rather unbelief, that, consulting nature, Unity is essential to the Deity; and that nothing is less deducible from the light of nature than a plurality of Deities; nay, that a plurality, in the common sense, is inconsistent with it, and therefore impossible.

It is, at the same time, true in fact, that all the ancient nations entered readily into the belief of a plurality of Deities, how contrary soever the opinion might be to the light of nature; and continued in that faith till Christianity beat them out of it.

One would not infer from this, that polytheism was an article of the original revelation, because we see the Heathens grafted many mistaken imaginations upon what was originally revealed; but it seems to be a fair conclusion, that something, concerning the Deity, not discoverable by the light of nature, and seemingly dissonant to it, was originally revealed, from whence this false, but universal opinion took its birth: and, if the doctrine of the Trinity was originally promulgated, and believed, it is easy to see how it might degenerate into polytheism, as the Christian Trinity ran the hazard of doing.

If this reflection is candidly weighed; if one considers, that the first teacher of polytheism could not possibly deduce his doctrine from reason, but must necessarily support it from authority; and if one then inquires what degree of authority would be sufficient to draw all mankind into the settled belief of this monstrous proposition, or indeed of any thing a-kin to it, from which this, by imagination or deduction, can be derived, he must needs conclude the authori-

ty must be, at least believed, divine, before reasonable creatures could give credit to it, and could be brought to speak of, and make their addressees to gods in the plural number.

It is impossible to make this reflection without joining to it, what has been already observed, that the word *Elohim*, used in the Hebrew scriptures to signify God, is plural; owned by all to be such, and particularly by the Jews, who have the idea of plurality in the highest contempt, and who make in their translations a very ridiculous distinction, rendering the same specific word, when, as they apprehend, it relates to the true God, singular, but plural, *Dii, Gods*, when it relates to the objects of the Pagan worship.

This reflection is the more important, that the word *Elohim* has confessedly a singular, *Elah*, used sometimes, but not often, in scripture. Now, when the sacred writers make use almost always of the plural word, not from necessity, but from choice, it is hardly possible to believe that this choice is altogether without meaning, and that a word, fit not to inform, but to mislead, was employed by the Deity, in the written instructions given to mankind.

The Jews, and with them those pretended Christians who reject the Trinity, as well as some who admit it, but are loth to lay much stress on the idiom of a language they do not give themselves the trouble to understand, strive to invalidate this observation, by suggesting that the plural may be used *honoris causa*, as princes, in our days, express themselves, *we* and *our*, and persons of condition, spoken to, are addressed by pronouns in the plural number.

But, not to insist on what is most certain truth, that the scripture language is, in every other instance, opposite to this suggestion, constantly using the singular when Jehovah speaks of himself, and most fre-

quently joining verbs and pronouns in the singular number to the plural *Elohim*; there are many cases in which the expression cannot possibly be reconciled to this Jewish pretence, of which this may be an example, Gen. iii. *And Jehovah Elohim said, Behold, the man is become like one of us, to know good and evil.* Here the expression is distinct, and unambiguous, and not to be twisted to the Jewish construction, by any force of figure, or example; one of us, necessarily implies more than one: and the Jews and their followers are so sensible of it, that they pretend Jehovah is here speaking with and to the angels, bringing them on the level with himself; which he no where else in the scripture does, and which there is no reason to suppose he does in this place, though it did not imply an absurdity; because the plural word *Elohim* preceding, sufficiently shews who the *us* were, and forbids the application of that pronoun to any other set of beings.

As this text affords a demonstration, in its own kind, that the plural *Elohim* is not used by chance, but is the fruit of choice, and significative, care is taken in scripture to prevent the grafting the notion of polytheism on an expression that might lead so naturally to it.

And therefore, Deut. vi. 4. the great command which Christ, being interrogated, declared to be the first and highest of the law, and which was directed to be laid up in the hearts of the Israelites, to be taught to their children, to be worn as signs upon their hands, and as frontlets between their eyes, and to be written on the posts of their houses, and on their gates, is ushered in with this remarkable admonition, *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord;* in the original, *Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our Elohim is one Jehovah.*

The word *Jehovah* is agreed by all to be the proper name or term for expressing the essence of the Deity; it is derived from the verb that signifies *to be*, and therefore imports *being, existence, i. e., he who is, exists, necessarily.*

This noun is singular, and knows no plural; wherefore there would be very little occasion for the declaration, that *Jehovah* is *one*, is not plural, if it were not for the plural word *Elohim*, which might lead into a mistake; to prevent which, the declaration was necessary, that though in *Jehovah* there were more *Elaks* than one, yet these different *Elohim* were but one *Jehovah*, one necessarily existent essence; which is allowing a plurality, not of distinct Deities, but of distinct *Elohim* in the same essence, Godhead, in *Jehovah*, who is one.

On occasion of mentioning the word *Jehovah*, the proper name or term used to signify the eternal, the necessarily existing Being, the cause and author of all other being, it may not be improper to observe, that this name is of the highest antiquity, coeval in all appearance with the original revelation, and given by the Deity, to express that grand character of his own nature, which modern wise-men value themselves on having, as they imagine, discovered from nature, and reason.

For, not to mention the authority of Moses, who makes use of that name just after describing the creation, it appears not to have been unknown to the ancients, though they lost the sense of it, and confounded themselves with new names for their fictitious divinities. The oracle in Macrobius declares *Jauo* to be the chief God; whence it is plain at least that the sound was known by those who consulted. The Zeus of the Greeks, was in all appearance from the same source; and the Jupiter of the Romans confesses more clearly that original: antiently Jupiter was

written and sounded *Jovis pater*; *Jovis* was the nominative, or, more properly, *Jehovah* with the Latin *-is* for a termination in all cases, and *Jovis pater* became, by corruption, in length of time, *Jupiter*, tho' it retained more of the original sound in the genitive, and the other cases.

Now, though the Roman people and religion were but modern, compared with that of some other nations, yet is their *Jovis pater*, which took much time to be corrupted into *Jupiter*, very antient; and, if they had their Theology from the Hetruscans, or from the Phœnicians, the term *Jehovah* must have been very pure and distinct, when it came first into Italy, to have remained so long so uncorrupted, as we see it did. No man, in his senses, will think the antient Greeks, and Italians, borrowed from the detested Jews the name of their God; and therefore it may be safely concluded, that the name which travelled thus into Greece and Italy, in the earliest times, was the name of the God of the whole earth, used and honoured by all flesh.

But, to return to the idea of the Deity given by revelation, though the unity of *Jehovah* is expressly settled, yet it is manifest from great numbers of texts, that there are different persons, different agents, in this essence, that have different characters, and are to be considered differently by men.

Besides *Jehovah*, who, by way of distinction, may be called the first Person, or the Father, in the language well known to all Christians, there is *the Name of Jehovah*, or *the Name Jehovah*, *the Word of Jehovah*, or *the Word Jehovah*, and *the Angel of Jehovah*, or *the Angel Jehovah*, with several other terms, all applicable to the second Person, or the Son, by the circumstances of the several passages; and there is *the Spirit of Jehovah*, or *the Spirit Jehovah*, to denote the

third Person, who retains the same name in the Christian language.

Though the term the Name of Jehovah, is become so familiar to our ears in the sense that means only the title or appellation, or metaphorically, the same and reputation of any one; yet there are flat texts to shew there is more in the matter; and that personality, as it is called, is ascribed to this thing called the Name Jehovah, or the Name of Jehovah.

Exod. xxiii. 20, 21. Jehovah promises to send his Angel before the people, of whom they are to beware that they do not offend him, *for*, says Jehovah, *my Name is in him*. This Name, said to be in the Angel, is something more than will tally with any reasonable acceptation of the word Name, unless you will suppose that word, the Name of Jehovah, to mean a Person.

In like manner, Psal. xx. 1. *The Name of the God of Jacob defend thee*; Isa. xxx. 27. *Behold, the Name of Jehovah cometh from far*; Zech. xiv. 9. *In that day Jehovah shall be one, and his Name one*; with infinite numbers of passages where the Name of Jehovah is said to be placed, to dwell, to act, shew to a demonstration, that by the Name Jehovah, a person, and not a title, is meant; and, indeed, that person by whom the Deity was to be revealed, discovered, and made known to mankind.

That there is something very extraordinary in this term the Name of Jehovah, and which corresponds ill with the notion of Unity of the present set of rebellious Jews, is evident, from the silly fictions they set up, by which to account for the surprising use made of it. They suppose something divine to be in the four letters of which the word is composed; that it is the highest crime and profanation to pronounce them, except in the high-priest, once a-year, on the day of expiation; and therefore never write, or attempt to

pronounce that word, substituting in all their writings, another word for it, and pronouncing, so often as Jehovah occurs in the reading of the scriptures, the word *Adonai* in place of it. They imagine something so sacred in these letters, that whoever could pronounce them truly, might work miracles, and control the power of nature at pleasure; and they carry their frenzy on this subject so far, as to account for our Saviour's miracles, by saying, that, gaining admission into the temple, he stole the name Jehovah out of it, rightly wrote, and pointed as it ought to be pronounced; and, by being so possessed of that secret, by the force thereof wrought his wonders, and might have wrought as many more as he would.

These circumstances will not prove that the term has the force I have ascribed to it; but surely they will convince any reasonable man, that there is something very remarkable in the expression, which has puzzled the Jews so much, and put them to such ridiculous shifts to get rid of the force of it.

Besides the Name, there is another term used to signify a person, or agent, in or of the Deity, under the title of the Word of Jehovah, or the Word Jehovah. This Word has many characters of action and personality that cannot possibly agree to what is simple or proper speech. *The Word Jehovah, or of Jehovah, came; the Word spoke; the Word acted. In Jehovah will I praise the Word; in God the Elohim will I praise the Word. Jehovah sent his Word, &c.* And therefore, without scruple or hesitation, the apostle St. John applies it to the divine Person that was joined to Jesus, agreeable to the plain scope of the Old Testament, and to even the notions of the Jews, of those times; whatever their successors, in opposition to the Christians, may have, since those days, devised, to obscure the light of the antient scriptures.

That the antient Jews, before their disputes with the Christians turned their brains, by the Word of Jehovah understood an active principle, distinct from the first Person in Jehovah, and also called properly Jehovah, is beyond contradiction evident from their antient *Targums*, of age, if not equal to the advent of Christ, yet framed before their disputes with the Christians had forced them to coin new and perverse notions. All the actions of a distinct person are attributed to their *Mimra Jehovah, the Word of God*, in many hundred passages; and often where Jehovah only is mentioned in the original, yet, where, according to their conceptions, which originally were true ones, the second Person is meant, they have, without hesitation, in their paraphrases, translated it *Mimra Jehovah, or the Word of Jehovah*; which leaves no doubt that the antients understood the scriptures, in this important article, as the apostles did, and as we do.

If the *Targum* of Onkelos, which is agreed to be of great antiquity, was published before the gospel came to be the object of the Jews opposition, this argument has all the force already given to it; and if in an age later, it has no less weight, because no one can suppose that complaisance to the Christians produced the expressions relied on. And indeed all that suspicion is excluded, and additional force is gained to the reflection, by considering that Philo the Jew, who was cotemporary with our Saviour, the ambassador for the Egyptian Jews to Caius Cæsar, unsuspected of Christianity, probably a stranger to it, suspected of a spirit of accommodation with Platonic or Pagan notions in his writings, intending to make his notions as plausible and palatable to the learned Heathens as possible, cannot divest himself of the notion of making the Word, his *Logos, a Person, nay, a divine Person*, of infinite power, nearly allied to the Deity, though with

a subordination that he can find no where in the sacred book.

There is still another term, behind, which the Jews have much obscured, by confining the meaning to one of the senses which the word bears; it is Angel. The Hebrew word, from which *Malak* is derived, signifies, *to send, to employ, to send on an errand, to do, or say, any thing*: hence *Malak*, in Greek rendered ἄγγελος; in Latin, promiscuously, *Angelus*, or *Nuncius*, in English, *an angel*, or *messenger*.

To this word, thus signifying, the translators, who originally were Jews, and all their successors, have given the meaning of what we, in common speech, understand by an angel, a created spirit, of which, we are taught to believe, there are immense numbers; and, what is worse, they have confined the sense to that meaning, insomuch that, when we hear of the Angel Jehovah, we are to understand by it such a created spirit.

But it happens unlucky for this construction, that, almost always where the Angel Jehovah is mentioned, there are characters which shew that this Angel is Jehovah: for, either the Angel calls himself so, and speaks in the first person, as Jehovah; or the person to whom he is sent, acknowledges him to be such, and addresses him under that designation.

Gen. xviii. The Three that appeared to Abraham, in the plains of Mamre, who are called sometimes men, sometimes angels, are said to be Jehovah; Jehovah is said to have appeared in that form; He of the Three that talks to Abraham, speaks in the first person, as Jehovah, and Abraham addresses his answer to him, as to Jehovah.

Exod. iii. The Angel Jehovah, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, speaks from the bush under the title God, gives himself the significant name which we translate, I AM THAT I AM, and is plain-

ly understood to be Jehovah, Deut. xxxiii. 16. *The good will of him that dwelt in the bush.*

Judges xiii. The Angel that appeared to Manoah's wife, first, and then to himself, is acknowledged to be Jehovah. And every Angel, called, of Jehovah, that appeared, or seemed in vision to appear, to the prophets, either speak as Jehovah, or are spoken to as such.

Exod. xxiii. 20, 21. The Angel whom Jehovah was to send before the Israelites, and whom he calls his Angel, had his Name in him, and was therefore to be observed. And,

Mal. iii. 1. The Angel (which we translate, the Messenger) of the Covenant, is declared to be the Lord; *and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple: even the Angel of the Covenant, whom ye delight in.*

The *Malak*, the Messenger, therefore, the sent, the Angel Jehovah, or of Jehovah, we see, is not always used to signify a created being, but, on the contrary, to denote a person of Jehovah, of the Deity, sent as a messenger to execute the will of Jehovah, of the Deity; and accordingly Christ, upon many occasions, declares that *he is sent of the Father, and came to do the will of him that sent him*: which tallies exactly with the language of, and with the ideas given, in the Old Testament.

All these terms, the Name, the Word, the Angel of Jehovah, with several others of the same kind, which evidently shew a distinction of Persons in Jehovah, are, by the characters that attend them, clearly applicable to one and the same Person, in the gospel called the Son, from the second Psalm; *the express image of the Father's person, who thought it no robbery to be equal with the Father; and by whom, and for whom, the world was made.*

The Old Testament, in multitudes of texts, mentions a third character, with attributes of action as a distinct Person, *the Spirit of Jehovah*, which is said to do, and direct many things, almost always under that specific name, and in distinction to the other persons or characters in the Deity; and the New Testament formally makes this Spirit a distinct Person, acting a proper part in the œconomy of grace to mankind.

When these things are duly weighed, men must be convinced that the godly, serious Jews, who studied their scriptures with attention, and without prepossession, must have been satisfied that there was a distinction of Persons in the Deity; and that the Word Jehovah, or of Jehovah, for example, was distinct from the Spirit; and both from the Father, who sent the Word; and then their surprise will cease at the freedom and easiness with which Christ and his apostles speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as distinct Persons of the Deity, as a thing well known and understood, without any preamble or apology; whereas, if this had not been a notion commonly received by the intelligent, it is impossible that the preacher of salvation could have made use of, or applied it, without having first explained it, and so prepared the hearers for it.

And, accordingly, we find that, when Christ was examined by the rulers, they did not at all boggle at the doctrine which mentioned the Son of God, but asked him whether he pretended to be such; and, upon his saying that he was, concluded him guilty of blasphemy, without further ceremony: which shews that the Son of God was a phrase known and familiar to them, as indeed it must be from the second Psalm. And surely they could not have entertained an idea of the Son, without also admitting an idea of the Father, which must have made that term also familiar to them.

So that in this instance it is, as in almost every other it will, on a careful examination, appear to be, the New Testament speaks the language of the Old; the principles and the sentiments are the same; and the New does little more than explain, and apply, what, by corrupt imagination, through length of time, was obscured or perverted, and in some degree lost in the Old.

The same consideration that makes the knowledge of the Trinity necessary for us, made it so to the believing Jews, to whom that mystery was disclosed in the Old Testament in writing; and made it so, also, to the first believers, to whom the mercy of God was discovered, whilst hieroglyphical records only were used; and therefore it is very reasonable to expect to meet with some footsteps of this discovery, some hieroglyphical representation, in which it was to be recorded.

We see the making of molten and graven images, representations of things in the heavens or in the earth, to be worshipped and served as gods, was a practice as extensive, as it was offensive, in the most early times, to the Deity; and as nothing could in itself, and considered literally, be more absurd, and less deducible from, and consistent with nature and reason, than to make any bodily representation of the Deity, and to serve and worship that figure as divine, it may be pretty securely concluded, that, great as the abuse was, it was not altogether human invention, but, probably, a notorious abuse, from the wantonness of imagination, of some laudable, sacred institution.

The practice is bitterly censured, and, under the most severe penalties, prohibited, in the law of Moses. No representation at all was to be made of Jehovah, nor was there any image of him to be met with in the tabernacle, or temple, to whom the peo-

ple should bow down; contrary to the practice of all the Heathen nations.

Yet, nevertheless, both in the tabernacle and temple there were hieroglyphical or emblematical figures set up over the mercy-seat, called Cherubim; and between, or in them, the Deity was to dwell, or reside; and to his presence, in that place, the blood was to be brought in within the vail, on the day of expiation.

Though the form of these cherubim was so well known in the days of Moses, that, without any other description of them but the name, the workmen being commanded made them; yet the knowledge of the figure they were of, was so little enquired after by the Jews, when they revolted from God, and receded from the purity of their religion, that they seemed totally to have lost it before they built the second temple. For it appears evidently that they had no cherubim there, from these circumstances: That Philo knew nothing of their form; that Josephus, the learned and inquisitive priest, who lived under the second temple, and had proper occasion to have known something about them, had any appearance of them been there, owns the ignorance of himself and of his nation, acknowledging they knew nothing about them, but that they were images of some sort of winged animals: and the conclusion from this last observation, and from the utter silence of the Jews, since the days of Christ, on that subject, is certain; unless one will chuse to suppose that Josephus, and the other later Jews, dissembled, and concealed their knowledge, lest some advantage might from thence have arisen to the Christians; which is not probable, because the Christians had not become, so early, so much the object of the Jews' jealousy and aversion, as afterwards they were.

These cherubim were to be beaten out of the same piece of gold that covered the ark of the testimony, called the mercy-seat; they were to look inwards towards the mercy-seat: the blood on the day of expiation was to be sprinkled on the mercy-seat, between them; Jehovah was to dwell, to reside, between, or in them; from thence he was to give directions, and responses: and these figures, with the mercy-seat and the ark, were all the furniture of the *sanctum sanctorum*, the most holy place, the emblem of the divine residence.

As this was the most holy place, and these figures, made out of the *propitiatorium*, the mercy-seat, were the most sacred emblems, it cannot be doubted they were of very high significancy, by any person who knows that the whole knowledge of early times was delivered and recorded in symbols and hieroglyphical representations, and who recollects that every other branch of the Jewish institution was emblematical.

And, if these emblems, rightly understood, conveyed knowledge, and directed the sentiments and the service of the antient Israelites, whose chief joy was meditation on the law of God, under the first temple; we cannot help lamenting the misfortune of the Jews, under the second, who surely had lost all the benefits the information by those symbols could give; and who, certainly, could not bring in the blood on the day of expiation within the vail, and sprinkle it, according to the first directions of the law.

If the loss of the knowledge of those emblems had been fortuitous, occasioned only by the length of time, between the destruction of the first, and the building of the second temple, in which all those that knew the form of these emblems, in the first, had perished, the Jews' case would be much to be pitied; but it is by so much the less a proper object of compassion, that abundance of circumstances shew the loss was

owing to their own gross fault, and perverseness; which justifies the judgment of blindness the Deity has been pleased, in pursuance of many denunciations, and even of the covenant solemnly entered into by their fathers, to execute against them.

The first temple was destroyed, and the people carried away, because of their rebellion against Jehovah, and their running after the false gods of the nations; and it seems pretty certain, that those who forsook Jehovah, entirely, would very little mind, or meditate on the sense of the symbols, or service instituted by him; and if any of them returned to their land, it is not very likely they would be solicitous about what they knew nothing of.

It is surprisingly remarkable, that, from the promulgation of the law on Sinai, till the destruction of Jerusalem with the first temple, the depraved turn of the Jews, who followed their own imaginations, was to polytheism, quitting Jehovah for the foolish gods of the nations; and that contrary to the clearest evidence, tho' they had amongst them the ark of Jehovah, the whole ornaments and liturgy of the temple, the fire of God burning on their altar, the Ephod with Urim to direct them, the prophets inspired to instruct them, and the interposition of frequent miracles, to prove Jehovah the only, the true God.

And it is equally remarkable, that, after their return from the captivity, when all these extraordinary pieces of evidence failed, notwithstanding their many faults and follies, they never once nationally swerved from Jehovah to the service of the gods of the nations; but, by guarding against that error, and the faulty effects of encouraging imagination, they ran into the contrary extreme; because of the Unity of Jehovah, they were unwilling to think of the Plurality of Elohim; and, lest imagination should carry them too far, they would go no farther than the letter

of the law, and the exterior of institutions and services; which, considered purely in that light, signified nothing, or was apt to mislead; neglecting the precept so often inculcated, and so carefully practised by the godly, to observe, to meditate on the law, and thereby to discover, and comfort themselves with the merciful and beneficent meaning of it. This turn of mind lost the knowledge of the Cherubim, it prevented their seeing the Messiah in Jesus.

As the cherubim are not fully described in the history of the framing and building of the tabernacle, or temple; and as the priests, who might have seen them in the *sanctum sanctorum*, and the other persons who must have seen them on the walls and doors of the temple, might have failed, before the second temple was compleatly finished, which would have furnished an excuse to the succeeding Jews for being without those emblems in the second temple, and for neglecting the knowledge thereby conveyed, it pleased God to exhibit to one of his prophets, Ezekiel, in vision, at different times, the figure of these emblems, which he has in two several places, chap. i. and x. carefully recorded. And it is not a little surprising, that, though the Jews unanimously hold Ezekiel to be a prophet, and these passages to be inspired, yet they never thought fit to give the figures he describes a place in their temple, or to guess at the meaning of them, though they hold that those visions contain the most important mystery.

The description of the creatures, seen in this vision by Ezekiel, is so full, and so anxiously, and laboriously given, that there is no mistaking some of the great lines of it. Each cherub had four heads, at least faces, and but one body; each had hands of a man, and wings: and the four faces were, first, the face of a bull, which is properly called a cherub; secondly, to the right of the bull, the face of a man;

thirdly, to the right of the man, the face of a lion; and the faces of the man and lion are said, chap. i. 10. to have been on the right side; whereas the face of the bull is said to have been on the left side; and fourthly, the face of an eagle, without taking notice of any particular conjunction between the face of the bull and that of the eagle.

And the prophet takes so much care to inculcate that the creatures, or figures, thus represented, were the cherubim, and that the descriptions in the first and the tenth chapters relate to the same cherubim, that there can be no doubt he describes the very cherubim placed in the tabernacle and temple; unless it can be supposed that this description was given, on set purpose, to deceive and mislead us.

Knowing thus, from Ezekiel, the form of the cherubim, and knowing the usage of the most antient nations, particularly the Egyptians, of framing compounded figures of this kind, for hieroglyphical or symbolical purposes, from the remains of their antiquities still extant, we can entertain no doubt that this representation was significative. He who cannot believe that the cherubim was set in the holy of holies to represent one animal, compounded of bull, man, lion, and eagle, must necessarily admit that the faces of these animals, so joined, were intended to signify several characters, powers, or persons, united together in one.

The Italian Janus was bifrons, sometimes quadrifrons; Diana was triformis; many Egyptian monuments shew two, sometimes three heads of different creatures to one body; in vast numbers of gems, particularly those called Abraxa's, human bodies have the heads, sometimes of dogs, sometimes of lions, sometimes of eagles or hawks, &c. and no one can doubt that each of those representations was symbolical.

In considering this subject, we must recollect, that, though the building of the tabernacle was not so early as to give birth to those strange compositions over the heathen world, yet this figure was exhibited, immediately upon the expulsion of man from paradise ; and was so well known, when Israel left Egypt, that the workmen made the cherubim, without any other direction than that of making them out of the gold that composed the mercy-seat, and placing them on either end of it, looking towards the mercy-seat, and stretching their wings over it. So that the compound figures of the antients, to represent their deities, had no other original but that at the east end of the garden of Eden.

However the emblems, or representations, of the Heathen divinities may have been complicated of the forms of different animals, originally ; yet we see, with length of time, they separated those symbols ; supposed the different figures to be different deities ; and at last worshipped them apart.

The Egyptian *Apis*, the bull, in imitation whereof the Israelites made their golden calf, and Jeroboam made his calves, was but one of those figures ; and the deity called Baal, amongst the Syrians, which is also called the Heifer Baal, was the same, and yet was the representation of the great God, the Lord of all.

The Persian *Mithras* was, in all the devices of the servants of that god, pictured a lion, or with a lion's head ; and the Egyptian Sphinx, which stood at the entry of their temples, had but two of the cherubical figures, joined in a strange manner, the head of the man put on the body of the lion.

The eagle was to the Greeks, and Romans, an emblem sacred to Jupiter, or Jovis, their great god, whom they pictured like a man. In the talons of this bird they put a thunderbolt, and this expression

of thunder, proceeding from clouds, borne by the eagle, whose way in the air is among the clouds, was the ensign of Νεφέλωγερέτης Ζεύς: and we know, from Sanchoniathon, that the Tyrians had a pillar sacred to wind, or air in motion, as well as they had to fire, built, as they said, by Usous the son of Hypsouranias; which fire and wind they worshipped as gods.

We know from antient authors, and we see in antient gems and other monuments, that the Egyptians were very much accustomed to make the body of their image, or representation, human, sometimes with the head of a lion, sometimes with that of a hawk, or eagle, and sometimes with that of a bull, a ram, or some other horned creature.

And as, from the original exhibition of the cherubim renewed, and recalled to its proper use, in the tabernacle, and temple, we see the antients had a pattern from whence they might have taken those representations, which they monstrously abused, we may reasonably conclude, that these representations which, naturally, and without some institution, would never have come into the heads of any men, flowed from an early practice, that had a different intent from that to which it was at last turned.

And, from the application made by the antient Pagans of each of the figures in the cherubim, to signify a different Deity, we may with reason conclude, that they understood that particular figure, in the cherubim, which they chose for their protector or god, represented, in the hieroglyphical usage of the early times, the power, the thing, or person, that they intended to serve.

Thus, for example, if the curled hairs, and horns, in the bull's head were, in hieroglyphical writing, made the emblem of fire in general, or fire at the orb of the sun, those who took material fire for their deity, would set up that emblem, and worship it.

If the lion's piercing eyes, or any other consideration, brought that animal to be the emblem of light in general, or of light issuing from the body of the sun, such as took light for their god, if any such were, would set up the lion for the emblem.

And if the eagle's soaring flight, and commerce thereby with the air, brought that bird to be the emblem of air, such as imagined a divinity in the air, in clouds, in winds, would take that bird to represent their deity.

And the human figure in the cherubim must, one should think, be the most natural occasion of that universal mistake which all the Heathens, at length, dropped into, of picturing their gods with human bodies, and the very earliest gave some countenance to, in joining parts of the human body to, almost, all their representations of their gods.

Now, so it is, that we do know, from innumerable texts of scripture, and from many passages in Heathen historians, and mythologists, that the objects of the earliest Pagan adoration, after losing the idea of the true God, were the powers in the heavens, that were supposed to maintain this system; the sun, moon, and stars, the host of heaven, the queen of heaven; fire, which was supposed to be one of the chief agents, in supporting the motion of the universe; light issuing from fire; and the air, clouds, winds, &c. which had infinite force, and were supposed to act a very considerable part in the government and preservation of the material world.

In particular, we know, that fire at the orb of the sun was worshipped by the antient Egyptians, who made use of *Apis*, the *bull*, for their emblem; and that the worshippers of *Baal*, the *beifer*, believed their god had the command of fire: for, in the remarkable contention between Jehovah and Baal, managed on the one side by Elijah, on the part of Je-

hovah, and on the other by four hundred and fifty priests, on the part of Baal, the test of all was, which of their Deities could command fire to come down from heaven to consume the sacrifice; and the issue disgraced Baal, and destroyed all his priests. And therefore, it is no rash conclusion, that the ox's or bull's head, was the hieroglyphical emblem of fire, perhaps fire at the orb of the sun.

We know, also, that many of the Egyptians and of the neighbouring nations worshipped light; it was difficult to separate the idea of light from that of fire. Those that served the moon and planets, had not fire for their object. The Persians, who worshipped fire, and eminently the body of the sun, had light, necessarily, in esteem, their beneficent principle. *Ormasdes* was light. Job talked of worshipping light as idolatry. There were several temples in Egypt, and in Canaan, to the light of the sun; and in Egypt, as well as in Persia, the lion was a sacred emblem. Wherefore, it seems highly probable the lion was used as the symbol or emblem of light, as the bull was made use of as the emblem of fire.

We know, also, that the earliest Heathens took the air, wind, that thing which in the antient languages is expressed by a word signifying, promiscuously, wind and spirit, that invisible agent which we feel, and which performs so many considerable effects in nature without being seen, for a deity; that to it they ascribed inspiration; their *Sybils*, their deliverers of oracles were inflated; futurities, the will of their god was discovered, by the countenance of clouds, and the flight of birds, which were religiously observed by *Augurs*, in the Hebrew, *cloud-mongers*; thunder was the voice of their god, which was portentous, and much observed; thunder was ascribed to the great Jove, the thunderer, and the eagle with the thunderbolt was his ensign. Whence we may, pret-

ty safely, conclude, that the eagle, to the worshippers of the air, represented, hieroglyphically, air, wind, spirit.

If the Deity, to give some idea of himself from a sensible object, had made choice of the heavens as the sensible object, from which to take the imperfect idea of his immensity, personality, and manner of existence and operation; if by the vastness and extent of them, his immensity was to be represented; if, by fire, the first Person, necessarily and continually generating and sending forth light, the second Person, and constantly and necessarily supplied by air, or spirit, the third Person, the Trinity co-existing, and co-operating, for the support of the whole, and in aid of each other, was to be represented: then, upon discovering this to mankind, the heavens would become the type of Jehovah, the divine essence; fire would become the type of the first Person; light, of the second; and air, or spirit, of the third: and whatever emblems, in hieroglyphical writing, were used to express these, as the names of the one, would, or might be used, for the appellations or names of the other.

So that, if this resemblance, or representation, were to be expressed in stone, wood, or metal, the emblems of fire, light, and air, or spirit, that is, from what has been said, the bull, the lion, and the eagle, ought to be conjoined together into the form of one animal; and every body, who understood the hieroglyphical emblems, would immediately think on the heavens which they represented, and, from thence, raise to himself the intended image of the Trinity in the divine essence.

Now we do know that the word *Shemim*, used always for the heavens, in the sacred language which God has chosen to express his revelation in, is plural, as the other word *Elohim* is; that its natural signifi-

cation is *Names*; and that it has been often made use of to signify the Deity. And if the characters, or powers, in the heavens have been chosen to point out, and express the Persons in the Deity, we can perceive the reason why the heavens have got the appellation of the Names, by way of eminence, as they denote, or are descriptive of those sacred Persons.

And we do, further, know, that the first turn the antient Heathens took from the worship of the true, the invisible God, was to the worship of the heavens, those names; which can, pretty naturally, be accounted for, if they were accustomed to think on the powers, or characters, in the heavens with any sacred regard, and to believe, that they supported themselves, and all the rest of this system, by one unerring, perpetual action and re-action upon themselves, and on every thing else, in the material world.

This defection from the knowledge and service of the true God began as early as the project at Babel. The scheme, then, was, to build a tower or temple to the heavens: and, though the design was then broken, by making the projectors fall out amongst themselves about the liturgy, and form of worship, which was confounding their language; yet it soon took place, in different families, and countries, though with different emblems, ceremonies, and services. Abraham, by the direction of God, left Ur of the Chaldees, where the rebellious service, probably to the light, had begun; and was, as were his son, and grandchild, after him, for many years, kept under the immediate direction of God, itinerant in regions, that were then but thinly peopled, and with the inhabitants whereof they had but small intercourse, to prevent the infection that might have come from communication with idolaters; and, by the immediate act of Providence, his race was brought down to Egypt,

and exceedingly multiplied there, under particular manners, and institutions, that kept them distinct from the people of that great empire; which, as it was one of the first mighty monarchies, so was confessedly the most noted for the learning, and superstitious profession, of the Pagan religion: and chosen therefore by the Deity as the scene in which his wonders were to be wrought, for the confusion of idolatrous imagination, and for establishing the authority of himself, his lawgiver, and consequently his laws, with the Israelitish people.

As substituting the visible similitude in the room of the invisible God was the first, it was the most criminal, the most dangerous abuse that ever crept into religion; and therefore the strongest, the most laborious efforts, if one may be allowed to say so, were made by the Deity to correct, and prevent it; and to set men right in that particular. Reasonings of any kind, could not have had the same weight to convince the idolatrous Egyptians, or the Israelites, who might have imbibed some of their notions, that the heavens, and in them the fire, the light, the air, or spirit, were no real gods, and were but servants of Jehovah, their Maker; as the repeated miracles wrought by Moses, the servant of Jehovah, in the sight of both nations; giving animal life to inanimate matter; turning rods into serpents; producing multitudes of frogs; turning water into blood; turning light into darkness; making the air produce swarms of obnoxious insects; inflicting diseases, and death, on certain classes, whilst others were safe; dividing the sea; commanding fire, and cloud, to execute his command, &c. miracles which were, to all intents, sufficient to convince the Egyptians of their error, and to guard Israel against falling into it.

And, accordingly, we see the point, principally, laboured in the writings left by Moses, is asserting to

Jehovah the power, pre-eminence, and dominion, attributed by the Pagans to the heavens. Hence his books begin with the creation, and formation of those heavens by the word of God; the history of the destruction of the earth, by the flood, is minutely recorded; the constant claim of the Deity is to be confessed as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and the giver of all the good things that were supposed to come, immediately, from them. The chief view of the law of the two tables, is to deny service to all beings but Jehovah; the professions of the faithful were, that Jehovah made the heavens; was the sovereign Lord and Master; and in those professions, the miracles in Egypt, &c. are referred to, as the foundation of their belief and acknowledgment.

It calls for very particular attention, that the first, and the grand mistakes in religion proceeded from taking literally, what was meant figuratively, or emblematically only; and so denying, in effect, the symbolical meaning; from which several impious absurdities followed, terminating in absolute infidelity, where some sort of impertinent belief was not maintained by extravagant imaginations.

The ridicule of this mistake appears very strong, in taking symbolical representations for the realities intended to be represented; whatever pretence a revelation, recorded in words by writing, might have to be so, literally, understood, sure it was extremely perverse, to take pictures only, for the original things or persons designed to be exhibited by the pictures.

And yet this folly we see mankind fell into almost in every particular. The *Elohim* were represented by the heavens, and these, again, in sculpture, or picture, by the bull, the lion, and the eagle joined. The first who wandered from the truth, mistook the heavens, fire, light, and air, or spirit, for what they were intended to represent, the invisible Trinity;

and as such worshipped them, using the figures of the bull, the lion, the eagle, only as hieroglyphical representations of those powers, which they truly were intended to be. But their successors, in process of time, forgetting the supposed influence of those powers in the air, or heavens, and observing religious service paid to the forms of those animals, made a second mistake; looked no more to the heavens as their gods, but stupidly imagined a deity to be inherent in those graven or molten images which they worshipped and served, and from whom they looked for favour, and protection; and, when those things became too absurd to be credited, and formally defended, imagination was set to work, and produced such ridiculous systems in respect to the Deity, as endangered the losing of the knowledge, even of the original symbols, and helped to introduce total unbelief and atheism.

It was taking symbols for realities, that made men imagine a purifying quality in the blood of beasts; that made them fancy that hecatombs slaughtered placated the Deity; and that God was delighted with the smoke that arose from the fat of burnt-offerings.

It was laying hold of the letter, and letting the meaning slip, that induced men to sacrifice their first-born, and to shed in sacrifice human blood: the blood of the first-born was to atone; the seed of the woman was to relieve mankind from misery; the first-born were sacred to God. Zealots to the letter, imagined the fruit, at least the first-fruit, of the womb had this virtue; and therefore offered it, literally, to their gods; which, at last, made human sacrifice fashionable.

In short, looking at the external symbols, and letter, and not at the apparent, certain meaning of both, drove the Heathens to all their follies; and first misled, and afterwards hardened and confirmed the Jews

in those absurdities, under which they are ridiculous, and miserable, to this day.

As the practice of the earliest Heathens, who first apostatised to the service of the heavens, in setting up the figures of the several animals, whereof the cherubim was composed, for the symbols, or emblems, of the different powers in the heavens, which they worshipped, is strong evidence what those figures were, originally, intended to represent; it becomes necessary for any one, who would have further satisfaction in this particular, to search the scriptures, to see whether, in the several appearances of the Deity therein related, there may not be some characters fit to confirm, or destroy the opinion that the figures in the cherubim were the emblems of fire, light, and air, or spirit.

And, upon due enquiry, it will be found, that, almost, always when the manner of Jehovah's appearance is described, the visible symbol of his presence was fire, or light, or air, or all three together: not to mention that the appearance of fire is generally, and, almost, necessarily attended with that of light.

The first appearance described is Gen. xv. where, to confirm the covenant to Abraham, the parts of the divided beasts, and the fowls, being set over against each other, the appearance of a smoking furnace, and a lamp of fire, passed between them. That this appearance contained fire, light, and air, or spirit, is evident.

The second appearance of which the form is mentioned, was under the oaks of Mamre, Gen. xviii. where the figure is not particularly described, though probably it was human, or like to it; and all we can gather from this, is, that the appearance was under the form of three persons.

The next appearance described is that to Moses, in the bush, Exod. iii. what was exhibited to view,

was a burning bush which was not consumed; and this exhibition could not possibly be without light; whether it was attended with cloud, or smoke, the text does not say.

The next emblem of the presence of God, described, is the pillar of fire, and cloud, that guided and guarded the Israelites in the wilderness; if light be allowed to the fire, in this exhibition, all the three are joined.

Immediately after this we see Jehovah giving the law, solemnly, from Sinai. He is said, *Exod. xix. 18. to have descended upon it in fire*: Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke; it was covered with a thick cloud, and there were on it thunders and lightnings; and Moses takes notice, *Deut. iv. 15. in cautioning the Israelites against graven images, and the making the similitudes of any creatures, to be worshipped as God, that on the day that Jehovah spoke to them in Horeb, out of the midst of the fire, they saw no manner of similitude: by which, the text shews, must be meant the similitude of any animal; besides, that it is certain there must have been the appearance of fire, and light from it, as well as from the lightning, and the cloud, which, naturally, denotes air, or spirit, whose peculiar language thunder is.*

When the tabernacle of the congregation was removed, and pitched without the camp, upon the people's rebellion whilst Moses tarried yet in Horeb, the pillar of cloud descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, so often as the Lord talked with Moses; and all the people, upon seeing this cloud, worshipped. *Exod. xxxiii. 9, 10.*

When Moses desired to see the way of the Lord, and Jehovah was to proclaim his name, he caused his glory to pass by him, *Exod. xxxiii. 22.* Now, if this glory of the Lord was of the same kind with that which filled the tabernacle, and temple on many oc-

cations, and which Ezekiel, in his account of the cherubim, describes, it must have consisted of fire, light, and air, or spirit.

When the tabernacle was set up, *Exod. xl. 34, 35.* the cloud of the Lord covered the tent, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle. When Aaron blessed the people, for the first time, upon entering upon his office, *Lev. ix. 23.* the glory of Jehovah appeared to all the people. When the temple was completed, and the sacred music had played, *1 Kings viii. 10, 11.* and *2 Chron. v. 13, 14.* "The cloud filled the house of Jehovah, so that the priests could not stand to minister, by reason of the cloud: for the glory of Jehovah had filled the house of Jehovah." And, *2 Chron. vii. 2.* when Solomon had done praying, at the dedication of the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house. "And the priests could not enter into the house of Jehovah, because the glory of Jehovah had filled Jehovah's house."

Now, if we examine what appearance this glory of Jehovah had, when he was, as one may say, in person, taking possession of his house, and can with certainty discover it, we may with confidence conclude, that the sensible image it bore, was what God intended should give the idea of the material thing, to which he, whose presence that appearance denoted, was to be assimilated.

The common notion of glory has splendour, a glare of light attending it; and, when brought into sculpture, or painting, is figured like rays issuing from the sun; and, in the passages above mentioned, a cloud, another emblem, was attendant.

In Ezekiel, chap. i. where the Cherub is described, the glory of Jehovah is also strongly painted. The vision begins with a whirlwind, a great cloud, *ver. 4.* and a fire infolding itself. *Ver. 13.* "As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance

“ was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures, and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.” Ver. 26, 27, 28. The appearance of a man, on the appearance of a throne; and the prophet saw, “ as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it: from the appearance of his loins even upwards, and from the appearance of his loins even downwards,” he saw “ as it were the appearance of fire; and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This,” says the prophet, “ was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord; and, when he saw it, he fell down upon his face.” And chap. x. ver. 4. where the same cherubim are described, the court is said to have been full of the brightness of Jehovah’s glory, whilst the house was filled with the cloud.

The description shews that fire, light, and cloud, were the principal, if not the only ingredients in the appearance of the glory of Jehovah; and the preternatural appearance of light, shining from the skin of Moses’s face, after the glory of Jehovah had passed by him, shews pretty well, what share light had in the composition of that glory; which the apostle Paul seems to have understood, when writing to the Hebrews, chap. i. he speaks of the brightness of the Father’s glory, the express image of his person.

Besides these appearances of the glory of the Lord, Jehovah acts in character, when, Lev. ix. 23, 24. pleased with the priesthood of Aaron, he sends fire, the emblem of himself, out from his face, to burn the sacrifice on the altar; when, 2 Chron. vii. 1. fire, upon the ending of Solomon’s prayer, came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering; and

when, 1 Kings xviii. 38. the decision was made, as above mentioned, between Jehovah and Baal, by fire from heaven.

These being, perpetually, the signals of Jehovah's presence, the symbols made use of to denote his appearance; these having been, jointly, or severally, the objects of the earliest Pagans' religious services, the Pagans acknowledging the bull, the lion, and the eagle, as the emblems of these their divinities, which, in length of time, they mistook for what they were intended only to represent; and the bull, the lion, and the eagle, joined in the appearance of one living creature, having been consecrated, as one may say, in the cherubim, for the residence of the presence of God in the holy of holies, one can hardly doubt that the figures, joined in the cherubim, which were the emblems of fire, light, and air, or spirit, the ordinary similitude under which the Deity usually appeared, were intended to represent those characters, or persons, in the divine essence, that fire, light, and air, or spirit, resembled.

Whatever occasion man might have had for the knowledge of the distinction of persons in the Deity, before the fall; yet it seems certain, the manner of his salvation, after his defection, could not have been imparted to him without revealing that truth, undiscoverable by the light of nature. He could not possibly know, how, or upon what account, his sins were to be pardoned, and himself re-instated in the favour of God, without being told, that the Deity consists of three Persons; that of those three, pursuant to a covenant made before the creation, the second was to take on him flesh, and in the form of a man to suffer; and thereby atone for the sins of mankind; and that the third was to keep a communication with the souls of men, for their guidance and comfort. And man could not possibly keep up, with any cer-

tainty, the memory of this revelation, without some memorial, some symbolical act, or thing, to preserve it; or look upon such symbol, knowing the sense of it, without gratefully confessing his obligations to those divine Persons, to whom he owed his being, his comfort, his salvation.

A Christian, the most important article of whose creed it is, that the Deity was joined to the humanity, that the Word was made flesh, that a Person in Jehovah became the Son of man, and a Man, born of a virgin, became the Son of Jehovah, will not scruple when he is told, that, in the representation of the Deity exhibited under symbols in the cherubim, for the instruction and comfort of mankind, the figure of a man is added to those that represent the Trinity; that this figure of a man is placed at the right hand of that emblem that represents the Father, the first Person, the fire; and that it is, in a particular manner, conjoined with the lion, the second Person, the light. He firmly believes what these figures, thus explained, represent; and must think it agreeable to the great condescension, and goodness of the merciful God, to acquaint man, from the beginning, with what so nearly concerned him, and what, without revelation, he could possibly have no idea of.

The hieroglyphical representation in the cherubim must not be considered, singly, from the form of it; but to that must be added the rank it had in the tabernacle, and the ceremony, or emblematical action in which it was concerned.

It has been already observed, that the cherubim were to be made out of the same pure gold that composed the mercy-seat, which they were to cover with their wings; and all that is described to us, further, of their posture, is, that, standing one at each end of the mercy-seat, their faces were to look towards each other, and towards the mercy-seat.

This mercy-seat, the space between the two cherubim, is described, particularly, as the place of the residence of the Deity, and of his appearance; he was to inhabit the cherubim, or between them; and he was to appear, there, in the cloud, and to declare his will from thence.

Besides this, there was a stated solemn ceremony to be performed, once a-year, on the day of expiation, before the mercy-seat: the priest was to bring within the vail the blood of the sin-offering, and with it to make atonement for all the people, by sprinkling of the blood upon the mercy-seat, and seven times before it; and this blood, so sprinkled, is said to expiate.

The atoning blood, in this highest act of the Mosaic institution, was sprinkled on that place, the mercy-seat, towards which the several faces of the cherubim were turned: and, if they were to see, they had no object to look at, on this solemn day of expiation, but the priest in the holy garment, the emblem of the second Person, the light, sprinkling this blood on, and towards, the mercy-seat; this could hardly fail to raise the idea, that the blood, so sprinkled, was the object, the divine Persons, whom these figures represented, looked upon as the propitiation, the ransom, the atonement.

And, if it was necessary, towards making this emblem complete, to represent all the Persons as looking upon, and accepting this blood, then it became necessary to make two several cherubs, and to place them at different ends of the mercy-seat, that the face of each figure might be turned towards the spot the blood was to be sprinkled on; because, had there been no more than one cherub, two only of the four faces could have been directed to the place on which the blood was to be sprinkled; besides that the signification of the circumstance of their faces looking to-

wards each other, which deserves a separate consideration, would have been lost.

Nothing is more certain, than that, under the Mosaic oeconomy, the Deity was to reside, to dwell, to appear, in the midst of the people, in the place where he was to put his Name; the place where, and where only, in exclusion of all others, sacrifice was to be offered, the altar was to be set up, and every other ceremonial, or emblematical act of their religion was to be performed, and more particularly the highest, in, or between the cherubim.

Whatever religious act was done, in this place, is said to be done before Jehovah; in the Hebrew, always, before the faces of Jehovah.

Now, if the several faces of the cherubim are taken to represent the Persons in the Deity, and therefore to be called the faces of Jehovah, the reason of this phraseology will be obvious, as the phrase itself will be significant.

It is not to be dissimbled, that the Hebrew words, translated *before the faces*, are often made use of to signify *before*, or *in presence of*, without regard to plurality of faces; but it deserves enquiry, how so strange a phraseology came to take place.

And it seems to call for very particular attention, that, before the Mosaic institution, and, indeed, from the first revelation, the presence of the Deity is represented as confined, with respect to religious acts, to a place; and what is done, in that place, is said to be done before the faces of Jehovah.

Cain is said to have gone out from the faces of Jehovah, and to have dwelt in the land of Nod, to the eastward of Eden. Now, if by the faces of Jehovah is not meant some particular place of his immediate presence, and if, on the contrary, his presence, as we translate it, in general, is understood, the thing will not be true: Cain could not convey himself out of

the presence of God, which is every where; but he might remove from that place which he chose, in a particular manner, for his residence, in the celebration of religious acts.

In like manner, the pot of manna, *Exod. xvi.* is ordered to be laid up, and was accordingly laid up, before the faces of Jehovah, before the testimony, long before the Mosaic tabernacle and ark was made, or erected. Laying it up any where, would, in one sense, have been laying it up before the Lord; but Aaron understood the meaning of the expression to be, to lay it up before the testimony, where the faces of the cherubim were.

Nor need any one scruple admitting the force of this last observation; for it is evident from this, as well as other texts, that the Israelites had an ark, and a tabernacle, consecrated to the residence of Jehovah, and destined to religious service, before the Mosaic tabernacle was reared up.

Upon the provocation of the Israelites, in making the golden calf, Jehovah being highly displeased, the tabernacle was by Moses taken out of the center, and removed far from the camp, and was called the tabernacle of the congregation, where Jehovah descended in a cloud, to give directions to Moses. Now this happened in the interval, between Moses's receiving instructions for building the tabernacle that was made in the Wilderness, and his giving orders for the contribution for that work; which evinces that the Israelites had, upon their going out of Egypt, a tabernacle for Jehovah, distinguished by his presence, and the symbols of it, before that reared by Moses was prepared.

Though the having a tabernacle for Jehovah, sufficiently implies the having an ark, with the mercy-seat and cherubim, the furniture of it; yet there is other evidence to shew that the Israelites actually had

an ark, different from that made by Moses. For when the ark, which had been taken by the Philistines, was locally at Kirjath-jearim, Saul, being at Gibeah of Benjamin, 1 Sam. xiv. 18. orders Abijah to bring him thither the ark of God; and the penman of that book adds a remark, for at that time there was an ark of God, besides that, with the children of Israel. And when the ark made by Moses, after having been carried from Kirjath-jearim, was lodged in Zion, Uriah, who had left Joab at the siege of Rabbah, being pressed to go to his house and to his wife, excuses himself, alledging it was not proper for him to take so much ease, when the ark, and Israel, and Judah abode in tents, and Joab, and the king's servants were encamped in the open fields, 2 Sam. xi. 11.

And it seems highly probable, that the ark thus brought to Saul when in camp, and the ark that was with Joab at the siege of Rabbah, was the same that belonged to the tabernacle which the Israelites carried from Egypt with them; because, after the building of Moses's tabernacle, it was unlawful to have made any new one in imitation of it.

If it is asked, whence the Israelites had an ark, a tabernacle, cherubim, and the presence, or the supposed presence, of Jehovah, in, or between, those cherubim? toward the resolution of that question, it must be considered, whence the antient nations had their cistæ, their arks, their images, their teraphim, their tabernacles, their temples; because the origin of both will, very probably, be found the same.

The account given us by Moses, of the publication of the gospel, after the fall, is very short, and concise, though the revelation may, in itself, have been very full and explicit. Hopes of mercy given are recorded in that single sentence, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent*: and we hear of no other symbolical thing, institution, or exhibition, except

only the placing, or inhabiting, the cherubim, to the eastward of Eden, upon man's being removed out of it.

The Jews, who have misconstrued the Angel Jehovah into a created angel, have thought fit, here, to understand, by the cherubims, two of the same sort of angels, who had got a flaming sword, amongst them, to frighten Adam from re-entering Eden, and meddling with the fruit of the tree of life; and this monstrous story they have made out of a text that, necessarily, means no such thing, and may fairly be construed to a sense big with the most important information to mankind.

For, in the first place, what the Jews and we translate *to keep the way of the tree of life*, with intent to prevent the coming at it, may as properly be rendered *to observe*, or *for observing*, and so discovering, or finding out, the way to the tree of life; and every body knows that the word *way of heaven*, *way to life*, in the Greek, as well as Hebrew learning, means to arrive at happiness.

In the next place, what we commonly translate *flaming sword* stands in two several nouns, not joined by construction, *flame* and *sword*, which last means nothing more particular than a killing weapon.

And, in the last place, the word we translate *placed cherubims*, is, almost always, in every other text translated *inhabited*; and whether you translate it *placed*, or *inhabited*, the next word ought to be translated *the cherubims*, as things or emblems well known to those for whom Moses wrote. So that Jehovah's placing or inhabiting these cherubims, where there was also the appearance of fire and sword, was the method, chosen by him, to make the way to the tree of life kept, or observed.

Now, as the established method for atonement and propitiation, the known way to the tree of life, was,

by employing fire in burnt-sacrifice, and the sword in shedding blood, both which must be done before the faces of Jehovah, residing in or between the cherubim; what hinders us to conclude, that the exhibition mentioned by Moses was, to the symbolical institution and service afterwards established amongst men, the same that the patterns shewed to Moses and to David were of the tabernacle and temple that afterwards were erected; and that Adam, and in him mankind, was thereby instructed to shed blood, and offer burnt-sacrifice, before the faces of such symbolical figures as were then represented? Surely, if the shedding of blood, and offering by fire, were then instituted, as we are pretty sure they were, the manner would also be directed. And, as we know, from the history of Cain, that Jehovah chose a place for his more immediate presence, called his faces, we cannot possibly doubt that directions must be given with what symbols that place was to be adorned, and how it was to be distinguished: nor can we reasonably hesitate to pronounce that the symbol of his presence was the cherubim, the place where, in the Jewish œconomy, he most certainly dwelt, and where, in the very text in question, he is said to inhabit.

If then this emblematical representation was exhibited, immediately after the fall, to express and keep in perpetual memory the revelation of mercy to man, by the blood and suffering of that perfect human sacrifice, who was to be joined to the second Person in the Deity, and to redeem and govern those that served, and trusted in him, we can clearly see the extent of God's goodness from the beginning, universally, to all mankind; and we can perceive how the Jews came to have a tabernacle, and an ark, with proper emblems, before that made by Moses; and how the nations came by their symbols, of the like nature; which, in process of time, they mistook

misapplied, and altered, when their corruption and imagination had once led them astray.

For, if, in that emblematical service, the symbol of the presence of the Deity was necessary, towards performing sacrifice, as well as the emblem of the great Sacrifice, the great Intercessor, &c. then it became necessary for men, when, by multiplying, they were forced to extend their quarters, and to people distant regions, to carry some symbol of the divine presence along with them, in order to the sacrificing acceptably; every nation, agreeing in the same service, must have one; and every family, so long as the right of exercising the priesthood remained with the first-born, must also have one, else that right would be of no benefit: and if they lived in the itinerant, no-made way, they must have a tent, or tabernacle, for placing those symbols in, as well as means of transporting them; as, on the other hand, if their seats were fixed, so as to suffer them to erect houses for themselves, they naturally would find houses, temples, for those symbols.

Nothing was more common than household-gods among the antients. Laban had his teraphim, which he calls his gods, and about which he was extremely solicitous; Rachel had no less respect for them than he. The Heathens carried their gods along with them, whithersoever they went. The idolatrous Israelites had, probably, in the wilderness, tabernacles for their gods Chiun and Remphan. The cause of making the golden-calf was, probably, compliance with this custom. Æneas is commended for the pious care of carrying his gods, his *Dii Penates*, from Troy to Italy; though what the form of them was, is not known. Every family had their *Penates*, their *Dii Lares*, though, in later times, they forgot what form these antiently were of. Teraphim, Penates, Lares, are all plural names for the representations of

those family-gods; and, laying those circumstances together, it is impossible to doubt that the making these representations, amongst the different nations and kindreds, owed its origin to one and the same cause.

It was because of the many corruptions introduced into the sacred service, in practice as well as in opinion, that the Jewish œconomy was instituted; and it was because the permission of every head of a family to be priest, for his own house, and to sacrifice according to his own will, had introduced the greatest uncertainty, as well as error, that the first act towards establishing the Jewish liturgy was, the abrogating that right, the depriving the first-born of all pretence to shed blood, and transferring that right to the family of Aaron.

It was for the same reason, and to the same intent, that sacrifice of all sorts was prohibited, except before the faces of Jehovah, in the tabernacle first, and then in the temple. In the wilderness no Israelite could lawfully kill a clean animal, for private use, in any other place, except before the tabernacle: and though, when the people had fixed seats in the land of Canaan, distant from the faces of Jehovah, they were permitted to kill of the flocks, or of the herds, for domestic use, provided they did not eat the blood or the fat; yet still, under the strictest menaces, they were prohibited to sacrifice, for fear of the abuses that might ensue.

The very prohibition, together with substituting the Levites in place of the first-born, and the change that was thereby introduced in the precedent practice, which all mankind but the Jews continued in, shews sufficiently what was lawful and regular before that prohibition; and the circumstances, above taken notice of, sufficiently shew the occasion and meaning of it.

Much of the same kind, and nearly for the same reason, is the prohibition to make graven or molten images to represent Jehovah, to fall down before them, or worship them; to erect altars, statues, or pillars, for religious service. Abraham, &c. built altars; Jacob anointed a stone, which he had set up, and called it Beth-el; and doubtless the practice of both was laudable, and, but for the prohibition in the institution given by Moses, each might have been lawfully practised by the Israelites in Canaan, as well as their sacrificing before the faces of Jehovah might have been imitated. But, after all religious service, the whole symbolical representation of the grace of God to mankind, was confined to the tabernacle and temple, then what was lawful to be done elsewhere, became unlawful; and, as it was thus impossible, after that period, to sacrifice any where but before the faces of Jehovah, the symbols of his presence, in the holy place, it became unfit to make, or to have in reverence, those symbols (which were only expressive, as they were joined with sacrifice) any where else, except when a prophet had immediate direction, or in cases of necessity.

The prohibition, then, is to Israel, that they should not make unto themselves graven images, the similitudes of any thing in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, &c. that they should not bow down to them, nor serve them; that they should not take upon themselves, wantonly, to assimilate God to what their imaginations might suggest to them he was like, by the practice, whereof mankind had already run into so many ridiculous and miserable errors. But this prohibition does not, in any degree, imply, that the Deity might not continue the use of the sacred symbol of his personality and grace, in the merciful act of redeeming mankind, in the holy of holies; no more than the inhibition to sacrifice, at large, prevent-

ed sacrificing in the temple. And, if it be said, that the actual institution of sacrifice, at the altar, shews the prohibition to sacrifice was not absolute, it may also be said, that the command to frame the cherubim is as express as that to burn holocausts at the altar.

It is, indeed, true, that the prohibition extends to prohibit all religious worship, even to the sacred emblems in the holy place; an extravagance into which the idolaters had fallen; and that may be a main motive for forbidding the very making, or having, such emblems in private hands. But then there was no danger of that abuse in the temple: the symbols were placed there, not as the objects of worship, but as descriptive, in some degree, of the manner of the act of grace, as it was to be brought about by the Persons in the Deity, for mankind. The presence, that was to be worshipped, was to be looked for between those symbols, or emblems, upon the mercy-seat; and the cloud, and the glory issuing from it, called away the attention from those representations. Besides that, to prevent abuses from imagination, and all attempts of worshipping, these sacred figures were kept in the innermost part of the tabernacle, and temple, to be approached only once a-year, and that by the high-priest, on the day of expiation.

That this was the apprehension of the Israelites, of those times, is evident from the conduct of their successors, who could not well fail to be acquainted with their notions; and who might think, that ordinances of this kind, intended to take place in a state of quiet, and tranquillity, when all the people had free access to the tabernacle, or temple, might be superseded, in case of absolute necessity, when the pious could not have access to present themselves at those places.

Micah, who lived in the time of the Judges, certainly feared Jehovah: the silver, belonging to his

mother, was dedicated to Jehovah, to make an ephod, and teraphim, &c. when he succeeded in getting a priest to his mind, he concluded that he was certain Jehovah would do him good; and this ephod, and teraphim, evidently were prophetic.

His scheme, then, manifestly was not to revolt from Jehovah, nor to serve idols, or other gods; but, whilst the confusion and oppression of Israel made it impossible to attend at Shiloh, to have a house of God in his own family, with sacred symbols, and a priest, who, before the faces of Jehovah, in that place, could make atonement by sacrifice, whilst communication with Shiloh was obstructed.

He, therefore, made an ephod, and teraphim, in imitation of the approved symbols; and, having them set up, had, Judg. xvii. 5. *Beth-Elohim, a house of God*. The translators, imagining that the teraphim represented false gods, have rendered the words *Beth-Elohim, a house of gods*; though, chap. xviii. 31. they render the very same words, when applied to the tabernacle in Shiloh, *the house of God*.

As the service, for which this ephod, and teraphim, this house of God, was intended, could not be performed without a priest, Micah, who, it seems, was not himself a first-born, consecrated one of his sons, probably the eldest, for that office, for want of one more fit; but meeting, at last, with a Levite, he engaged him to serve in that station, and consecrated him, in full belief that this action would be acceptable to Jehovah.

And, accordingly, we see Jehovah was propitious to this pious, though irregular design. The ephod, and teraphim, consulted by the Danites about the success of their undertaking, returned a true answer; which so far raised the esteem of the Danites for those sacred symbols, that they robbed Micah of them,

and set them up in their own country; where they continued in reputation till the captivity.

Micah, complaining of the injury done him in taking from him the teraphim, says, they had taken away his *Elohim*, his God. It is difficult, if at all possible, to imagine that Micah, who set up those figures to do service to Jehovah, could have meant any more than that the teraphim were the symbol, or representation, of the *Elohim*, necessary to be used in the chief act of religious service; and, if that shall be the construction, the resemblance between teraphim in private service, before the Mosaic law, and cherubim in the public service, after it, is pretty observable.

It was, in all appearance, for the same reason, and to the same end, that Gideon, a servant of the true God, who had seen the Angel Jehovah, to whom Jehovah had spoken, to whom and by whom Jehovah had wrought wonders, made an ephod of the golden spoils of the Midianites, and set it up in Ophrah, his city; whither the Israelites, in process of time, ran a whoring after it, and where it became a snare to Gideon, and to his house.

That this ephod had teraphim, and all the proper appurtenances, as Micah's had, attending upon it, is not to be doubted; and it is remarkable, that Gideon's act is not censured for any inherent malignity in it, but only for the consequences of it; as the ephod he set up, in process of time, debauched the people, and became a snare to him, and to his house.

These instances, pretty plainly, shew, that teraphim were no more than a copy of the original cherubim, applied to the same uses that the cherubim were on the mercy-seat: and as all mankind agree, from many clear proofs, that the teraphim were images, or representations, of what the antients took to be expressive

of their Deity, it can hardly be questioned that the cherubim were intended for the same purpose.

Supposing this to have been the case; as the very exhibition must have been intended to represent Trinity in the Deity, and the share each Person had in the salvation of man, it is impossible the Jews could have rejected the belief of the Trinity, and with it the Messiah upon his advent, so long as they retained the memory, and the understanding, of that hieroglyphical representation. But, as it was fixed in Providence that they should disbelieve the one, and reject the other, their wild imaginations, whilst the figures remained in the temple, led them to neglect all reflection upon them, and to run after false gods; and this necessary piece of knowledge, towards understanding the system of grace, dropt so totally out of their heads, or rather they had framed notions so contrary to it, that, upon their return from the captivity, the ark and cherubim had no room in their temple; tho' these were the very kernel of all their religious ceremonies; and though the knowledge of the figures of the cherubim was preserved by Ezekiel, a prophet allowed by themselves to be inspired, as the dimensions and fabric of the mercy-seat were by Moses.

That the shutting up those figures in the *sanctum sanctorum* might have contributed to the loss of the knowledge of their form, amongst the Jews, may be true; but then, if they had not been described by Ezekiel, that loss would have been total, and irreparable; and we, as well as they, should be deprived of the benefit of that representation, to evidence the original and permanent design of the merciful Deity: but as the loss of the ideas, which ought to have resulted from that representation, answered the end of God in the hardness of the Jews; so the preservation of those sacred figures, by Ezekiel, serves to convict the Jews of that hardness, to render them inexcusable

for their infidelity, and, at the same time, to confirm and illustrate the faith of Christians.

The form and the meaning of the representation in the cherubim, is not the only piece of useful knowledge the Jews, to whose custody the sacred oracles were committed, have lost as to themselves; though, in preserving the sacred books, they have providentially saved them for the benefit and instruction of those who were called, to be the people of God, in their stead.

It has been already observed, that there is a particular emphasis, which the Jews will not see, in the plural *Elohim*, used always in scripture to signify *God*; and it is incontestible, that the word itself carries some idea in it descriptive of some character, some relation, the Being described bears to man.

The word *Jehovah* the Septuagint translates *Κύριος*, and we, after it, *Lord*; because of the delicacy of the original interpreters, who might think it some sort of profanation to translate that sacred word, and make it common in its known meaning. Neither Jew nor Christian doubts that *Jehovah* expresses *the essence that necessarily exists*; and every body knows that it does not mean what *Κύριος* properly signifies: the Greek word is a faithful and just translation of *Adoni*, which the superstitious Jews have placed in the room of *Jehovah*; it signifies *Dominus, Lord, Master*, but carries nothing in it of the idea of the original.

The idea resulting from the word *Κύριος, Lord*, is relative, and bears a particular regard to *subjects, servants*, without which the idea of *Lord* cannot subsist; but the idea arising from the word *Jehovah* is absolute, bearing no relation to any thing but itself, and standing fixed and determined by itself, subsisting though nothing besides did exist.

And, therefore, we can reasonably say, *my Lord, thy Lord, his Lord, our Lord, their Lord, the Lord of*

the land, &c. and those expressions are often used in scripture; but we cannot say, *my Jehovah*, *thy Jehovah*, &c. and in fact there is no such expression in the whole sacred book: and, when we translate, *my Lord*, *thy Lord*, &c. the word translated is never *Jehovah*, but always *Adoni*, or some other word of the same signification.

As we discover the idea conveyed by *Jehovah* to be absolute, so we perceive the idea implied in *Elohim* to be relative, by the use of it: nothing is more common than *my*, *thy*, *our*, *their*, *his Elohim*, which never is said of *Jehovah*; and as the word has some signification of relation, the translators ought to have expressed it by a word that bore some such sense.

But, as they have erred in rendering the absolute word *Jehovah* by the word *Lord*, which carries an idea significant of relation: so they have erred, on the other hand, by rendering the word *Elohim* Θεός, Θεοί, *God*, *Gods*; which, so far as we know by the derivation assigned for it, has nothing significant in it, at least carries no idea of relation to us, or to any other thing.

If the word Θεός, or the word *God*, have no significant meaning in themselves, and are made use of, as sounds only to raise the idea of the eternal Being; then the applying that word by the relatives, *my*, *thy*, &c. is improper; the eternal Being, absolutely considered, has no more relation to one, than to another: and, if the term Θεός had originally any signification of relation, by all we can discover from the Greek antiquities, it was lost long before the Septuagint translation; nor do we know what the precise meaning of the Saxon word *God* was, other than to denote the supreme beneficent Being.

The Jews, therefore, ought to have translated the word *Jehovah* by a word of the same signification;

or at least to have rendered it *totidem literis*, if they could not find a word of the same import; and they ought not to have translated it by a word that has another and a different meaning: and they ought not to have translated *Elohim*, which most certainly had a signification of relation, by a word which had no signification at all of relation affixed to it; on the contrary, they ought to have kept up, in the translation, to the true meaning of the word; or to have retained the Hebrew term, *totidem literis*, in the translation, as they did in proper names; for then, though they must have left men in the dark, they would not have misled them, nor done the mischief they have done to their successors.

Without enquiring whether the loss, or the concealing of the meaning of this word, proceeded from folly, or faultiness, or from a mixture of both, in the Jews, it is highly necessary to search, in order to the recovery of it; knowing the genius of the Hebrew language to be such, that significant words are framed from roots that yield some certain, fixed idea, and thereby convey a determined meaning.

In looking over the radical words of the Hebrew language, one finds the root *Elah* to mean an *oath*, or *adjuration*, the *execration* made to affect the breaker of a covenant; and the genius of the language certainly admits the word *Elah* to be used, from that, to signify a *person that hath taken upon him this oath*, and *Elohim* to denote *more persons* become subject to it, or entering into covenant, or agreement, together.

That *Elohim* should be formed, from this root, to signify *persons under the obligation or execration of an oath*, may seem, at first sight, somewhat hard; but that notion will become more familiar, when one considers that *Jehovah*, throughout the sacred scriptures, is said on many occasions, in confirmation of any promise, or covenant, relating to a future event,

to swear, to swear by himself, to swear as Jehovah liveth, in order to create absolute certainty, and reliance on the performance.

Why Jehovah is thus represented as taking an oath, and what the nature and manner of that oath may be, merits a distinct consideration; but since, in fact, he represents himself to us in that light, as binding his promises by oath, we may easily conceive why he may chuse to be called, and considered, as the God bound by oath, the Being solemnly engaged under an immutable obligation, by those who are to believe in, and rely on his promises.

Though we have no footstep, so far as I know, left of this signification, in the terms which the Greeks, or Romans, or other later Heathens, made use of to signify the Deity; yet the Greeks had their *Jupiter* *Ὀπίσιος*, and the Romans their *Jupiter Fæderator*; and nothing was more common, amongst those Heathens, than the notion that the supreme God could bind himself by oath; nay they describe, with fictitious circumstances, the particular oath that was immutable. Here, again, is an instance of a very extraordinary notion, very far from being deducible from the light of nature, picked up, and maintained universally, amongst the most antient nations we know; which tallies wonderfully with what the sacred book, of which they knew nothing, exhibits; and must therefore have flowed from the same original.

If we admit that *Elohim* carries the notion of *Fæderatores*, *beings or persons in alliance*, bound by oath to make their engagement effectual, then we evidently see why they may, are, and ought to be, called, *my, our, their, &c. Elohim*; why Jehovah describes himself by the title of the *Elohim of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Israel*; why they call upon him as their *Elohim*; why, in their praises, they ascribe to their *Elohim* power, goodness, faithfulness, beyond the

Elohim of other nations ; and why the leading encouragement to the Israelites, to do well, is, that Jehovah is, or will be, their *Elohim*, and they are, or shall be, to him a peculiar people ; as, on the other hand, if they broke their covenant, the *Elah*, the oath or execration would reach them.

And, surely, if Jehovah was pleased to make, or to represent himself as making a covenant for the benefit of mankind, or of any particular people, by which he was unalterably bound to redeem and preserve them, on their performing certain conditions, the most kind, and, at the same time, the most useful appellation he could chuse to be addressed to by, is that of *Elohim*, in the notion of *Fæderator* ; because it could not be pronounced, with attention, without raising the most thankful sentiments of the mercy and goodness of God, joined to the strongest confidence in his favour ; and, at the same time, warning the party of the danger of transgressing, by non-compliance with the conditions to which he, on his part, was bound.

If *Elohim* was a term peculiar to Jehovah, as God of Israel, with whom he plainly appears to have been in covenant, the reason of that appellation would be pretty obvious ; but so it happens, that he is called the *Elohim* of the whole earth ; and, in the description of the creation, the works performed by the Eternal are said to be done by the *Elohim*, and all the antient nations admitted the term *Elohim* as descriptive of their God. So that it will be a strong objection against this sense of the word *Elohim*, if no reasonable account can be given of an earlier covenant than that with Abraham, and if that covenant did not extend to all mankind.

Whoever believes that there are three persons in the Deity, whereof one became bound to join himself to humanity, and perform compleat righteousness,

and give compleat satisfaction for the sins of mankind; one became bound to assist man, thus redeemed, to do his duty, and to reform his heart; and one became bound to accept of this satisfaction, and, upon receiving it, to admit man to fellowship and favour; will not scruple to allow, that, before even the creation, a covenant, or agreement was made to this purpose between the sacred Three, in the event of man's falling; and he will be the less scrupulous to admit this, when he considers several texts that suppose it; particularly the cxth Psalm, ver. 4. which says, "Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."

But whatever may be thought of this; as none, who considers and believes the scriptures, can doubt that this covenant was made known to the first man, on the fall; if that term *Elohim* was consecrated for his information and comfort, it would pass current amongst all mankind, his descendents; and that would sufficiently authorise Moses, in describing the creation, to make use of the term *Elohim*, ascribing to Jehovah, the *Elohim* upon whose fidelity all mankind were to depend for salvation, the creation of this system, and of man.

And though Moses does not, formally, relate that Jehovah acquainted man, immediately upon the fall, of a covenant made for his salvation; yet several passages, as recorded by him, shew that mankind had early knowledge of this covenant. For, in speaking to Noah, both before and after the flood, Jehovah says he will establish his covenant with Noah, and with his seed; not using the word that is, commonly, translated *to make a covenant*, which would have been done if no covenant had been made before; but making choice of an expression that presupposed a covenant, formerly made, and known to be made to

Noah, who was made sure he was to reap, after that declaration, the benefit of it.

And if one enters into the belief that this covenant (which gave birth to the appellation *Elohim*) was made by the *Elohim*, from the beginning, and was intimated to mankind, upon the fall, when the purpose of mercy was first revealed; and when, for explaining and recording that purpose of grace, the whole emblematical institution was appointed, and the cherubim were exhibited; he will readily admit, that the position of the two cherubs, with their faces looking towards each other, and at the mercy-seat, where the blood for atonement was to be sprinkled, might represent the *Elohim*, as parties in the act for making a covenant, looking and relying on each other for the performance, and regarding the blood, which was the emblem of the consideration for which man was to be redeemed: and this opinion he will the more readily give into, when he recollects that the ark, which supported the mercy-seat and the cherubim, the principal emblems of the Jewish religion, is most commonly called the ark of the covenant.

As the Jews cannot be pardoned the losing the sense of the word *Elohim*, they can hardly be forgiven their plain endeavour to hide the original meaning of the word translated *covenant*.

That *Berith*, the word so translated, does not in its original sense, signify covenant, is evident from this; that the formal phrase made use of to signify the making a covenant is, precisely, to *cut off*, or *slay*, *Berith*; much in the same way as *icere*, *percutere*, *ferire*, *fœdus*, is, amongst the Romans, to signify *the making a covenant*.

Berith, therefore, in its original signification, denotes something that was to be *cut off*, to be *slain*; and Moses, Exod. xxiv. 8. after having, as the symbol of the covenant concluded between Jehovah and

the people, divided the blood of the sacrifice into two equal parts, and after having sprinkled the one half on the altar, sprinkled the other half on the people, saying, *Behold the blood of Berith, which Jehovah hath cut off with you, concerning all these words.* And Zech. ix. 11. prisoners are set free by the blood of the covenant, *Berith.*

The Latin *literati* very truly assign the rise of the phrase *ferire fœdus*, when they say, that in all leagues, covenants, and agreements, it was the antient and original custom to slay some victim, to sacrifice; whence, mentioning the solemn act, the slaying the victim, in common usage, came to signify the whole act of making a league, to which it was applied: but they fail in assigning an adequate reason for the ceremony of slaying any animal, at treaties; which again must have given rise to the form of speech in question.

It has been already observed, that the blood of the Redeemer, who, in due time, *was to be cut off*, was the consideration of the original covenant between the *Elohim*, and between them and man; and the cutting off, and sprinkling the blood of a *type*, a creature substituted in the room of the Redeemer, till his real advent, was the symbol of that covenant, used, even by Jehovah, in making covenants with men, as in the instance at Sinai; and, therefore, used by all men when they entered into solemn agreements with each other. *Cutting off a creature*, then, in a particular manner, or under a particular character, being the symbol of that important *covenant*, it is no great wonder that men, in their solemn engagements with each other, should make use of that sacred act; and that saying, shortly, that such *creature*, by such name or character, was *cut off*, should, in common usage, signify that a *covenant was made*.

Though these reflections may give some reasonable satisfaction why *cutting off*, or *slaying a victim* was

used in making covenants; yet it is still necessary to inquire what particular character the thing, called *Berith*, bore, to distinguish it from common victims in ordinary sacrifices, and to appropriate it to the use of *binding covenants*; since there is no appearance, after the most accurate search, that *Berith* was the name of any sort of animal used in sacrifice.

In examining carefully the Old Testament, two passages, and no more, are to be met with where the Jews have not ventured to translate the word *Berith*, *covenant*, but have been necessarily obliged by the context to give it its true, original signification; though, to divert the reader's attention, and to prevent his making any inferences from the sense of the word, in these texts, they have, in an arbitrary manner, pointed the letters so as to make the same letters, which in every other passage, sound *Berith*, to be in these texts pronounced *Borith*.

Mal. iii. 2. The angel of the covenant of *Berith*, is said to be like the refiner's fire, and like fuller's *Berith*, soap, and comes to purge and to purify. And,

Jer. ii. 22. Reproaching Israel for their wickedness and uncleanness, Jehovah saith, *For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much Berith, soap; yet thine iniquity is marked before me.*

These passages, evidently, shew, that the *Berith* has in it the notion of cleansing, purifying; and the root from which, in that sense, it must rise, is *Bar*, *Barar*, which signifies *pure, to purify*; and the word *Berith*, formed from that root, may signify properly *purification*, a *purifier*, a person or thing fit to *purify*.

Keeping in view this notion of the word, and recollecting that every thing was, under the law, even the most holy things, to be cleansed, to be expiated, to be sanctified, by blood; that the pollutions of mankind were to be washed away by it; and that the blood, which thus cleansed, was but typical only of

the blood of the real *purifier*, who, in the New Testament language, is *to wash us in his blood from all our iniquities*: who can help concluding, that the great sacrifice to be *cut off*, in due time, was called *Berith*, the *purifier*, to signify the end of shedding his blood; that the representative beasts the types, were called by the same name; that to *slay*, or *cut off*, *Berith*, or the beast representing *Berith*, the *purifier*, being the very sign, or symbol, of the great, the original *covenant* for the salvation of mankind, which was to be repeated for confirmation of solemn covenants amongst men, the term or expression of *cutting off Berith*, or the *purifier*; came in process of time to signify the act to which, amongst men, it was applied, *the making a covenant*; the word *Berith* retaining, nevertheless, its original signification, and being to be taken in that sense, when the scope of the text requires it should?

Understanding the matter thus, many passages, that otherwise are extremely obscure, if at all sense, become clear and significant. Isa. xlii. 6. *I Jehovah will give thee for a Berith, covenant, of the people, and for a light of the Gentiles.* xlix. 8. *I Jehovah will give thee for a Berith, covenant, of the people, to establish the earth.* If what is translated *covenant*, were rendered, as it ought to be, *purifier*, nothing could be more clear and comfortable than those texts.

Upon the same principle the blood of *Berith*, the *covenant*, will signify the blood of the *purifier*, without excluding the notion of that blood being the seal, and symbol, of the covenant.

And, in like manner, in many passages where *Jehovah*, instead of using the word, translated *to make a covenant*, uses other words, which signify, *establishing, giving, placing, his Berith, covenant*, to, or with, any one, the word *Berith* may more properly mean the *purifier*, than the *covenant*.

Gen. vi. 18. When *Jehovah* acquaints Noah that

he is to destroy the earth, with all its inhabitants, he assures him, at the same time, that he is to establish his *Berith* with him, and his family. Now, if *Berith* be taken, in that place, for the *purifier*, the promise amounts to this, that the *great purifier* was to come of his line; which happened accordingly.

In the same way, Gen. xvii. 2. Jehovah says to Abraham, *I will give my Berith between thee and me.* And verse 4. *As for me, behold my Berith, covenant, is with thee.* And, if by *Berith*, in those expressions, is meant the *purifier*, then these are formal declarations that the Messiah was to come of Abraham; which explains the other declarations, *that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed.*

And that declaration in which David so much exults, in what is called his last words, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. *yet he hath placed with me an, or the everlasting Berith,* will signify that Jehovah had decreed the *purifier*, the Messiah, should spring out of his house, though his house was not so right with God as he could have wished it.

Many more passages will appear in a very different light, from what they did formerly, upon taking the word in this sense; which may be the reason why the Jews, who mistook the true *Berith*, when he came in accomplishment of the law, and the prophets, have used much skill to hide the true meaning; which most undoubtedly was understood by their forefathers, after the death of Gideon, when, Judges viii. 33. they went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal *Berith* their god, to whom there was a house, or temple, at Shechem, chap. ix. under the title of *El Berith*, or the God *Berith*.

Whether the Israelites or the Canaanites built this temple, is not material; the god was, surely, of the manufacture of Canaan, who spoke the same language with the Jews, and expected purification as well as

they, though perhaps after a strange manner. *Baal*, or *El*, *Berith*, translated *the Lord*, or *God*, *the covenant*, will hardly make sense; but the *Lord*, or *God*, *the purifier*, might be a proper object of worship, for those who were so fond of purification, as to cause their children to pass through the fire to purify them, and even to sacrifice their children, by fire, to atone for crimes, and avert wrath.

Having said so much for explaining the Hebrew phrase for *making a covenant*, it may not be improper to enquire a little into the origin of the Latin phrase *ferire*, *icere*, *percutere*, *fædus*, which evidently is of the same kindred.

Waving the conjecture of the grammarians, that *fædus* might, in the old Tuscan language, have been used for *hædus*, a kid, which again might be the animal accustomed to be slain, or cut off at concluding treaties; because it neither appears that *hædus* was antiently written *fædus*, nor that a kid was the regular sacrifice: I think it most probable that *fædus*, in the phrase in question, meant originally what the adjective *fædus* -a -um, means, at this day, *vile*, *abominable*, *polluted*.

Now, it is certain that in the Hebrew language the sacrifice gained its name, from the end for which it was offered; a *sin-offering* is called, briefly, *sin*; a *trespass-offering*, a *trespass*; wherefore the victim, brought for a *sin-offering*, is called, without any addition, a *sin*. Hence a man is directed to bring his *sin*, if a creature, the type of that Person who was to stand in the place of the sinner, to the door of the tabernacle, to lay his hand upon the head of his *sin*; the priest is to kill the *sin*, to pour out the *blood of the sin*, &c. without adding at all the word *offering*, to explain the meaning.

As, then, all religious rites flowed from the same source, and were instituted in the same language, it

is very natural to conclude, that, upon the formation of a new language, the expressions concerning those sacred rites would be framed in some conformity to the original language. Now, if, in the first language, that which was offered for *sin*, which was to atone for it, and to purge it away, was, by those who expected that effect from it, called *sin*; why may not we believe, that what was offered to purge what was termed *fedity*, *pollution*, *abomination*, might be called *ædus*, if *ædus*, in the language of the country, signified *fedity*, *pollution*, *uncleanness*?

And, if it is allowed that *ædus* might signify the creature offered to atone for sin, or uncleanness, then *ferire*, *percutere*, *ædus*, would be the the very act of offering for *sin*, and must come to signify *making a covenant*, in the very same way that *cutting off*, or *slaying*, *Berith* does.

To these observations, which tend to shew the antiquity, and authority, of revelation, and the true end and meaning of the emblematical, and predictive institutions, as well as of the terms in which the written will of God is conveyed, many more might be added; and these, already offered, might be supported by producing the passages from authors sacred and profane, by which they are to be vouched: but, as on the one hand, this would exceed the design of these sheets; so, on the other, it would be but doing, over again, what is already infinitely better done by the ingenious *Mr. Hutchinson*, author of *Moses's Principia*, in that and his other surprising works, from whence all the thoughts concerning the antiquity of, and manner of interpreting revelation are borrowed, and which are fraughted with discoveries, as useful as they are new.

This Author has been complained of for writing in a manner that has been called abstruse and dark, and, perhaps, with some reason; but, if he is not al-

together to be acquitted from that charge, sure there is no excuse for those, who, pretending to admit revelation as divine, will not give themselves the trouble to examine, with due attention, his works, which make the Old Testament speak a language understood by our Saviour and his apostles, and which hardly any body appears to have understood since their days. It is scarce possible to pay too dear, in labour, and study, for such discoveries; and, if regard for revelation were out of the question, it is amazing that curiosity does not prevail with men of leisure, and learning, to look into books that are stored with so much entertainment in that way.

If any unprejudiced person, acquainted with the scriptures, who has looked into the antient Heathen learning, shall examine with tolerable care, those thoughts; it is to be hoped, he will find a ready answer to all the productions of modern, as well as antient infidels; and remain, to his great comfort, satisfied, that Christianity is, indeed very near, as old as the creation.

1843

Received of the Hon. the Secy. of the Navy
the sum of \$1000.00 for the purchase of
the ship "Hull" for the service of the
Navy.

Witness my hand and seal this 1st day of
January 1843.

John C. Calhoun

Secy. of the Navy

Washington

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REFLECTIONS

ON THE SOURCES OF

INCREDULITY

WITH REGARD TO

RELIGION.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Treatise was left imperfect by the Author, a late eminent Lawyer; who was no less conspicuous for his zeal in the cause of Religion, than for his sincere love of justice, and an invariable attachment to the laws of his country, in the several high stations he filled with applause. That it is unfinished, was occasioned by his death, an event universally lamented: that it is now published, is owing to some of his friends; who are willing to believe, that even a fragment by so masterly a hand may not be an unacceptable present to the public.

REFLECTIONS

O N

INCREDULITY.

IT is rash to affirm, that the universe, or even the solar system, was made principally for the sake of the earth, or of man; because, for ought we know, there may be many more, and more considerable uses for it. It is at the same time not certain, at least to me it does not appear to be so, that there was any other use for creating these immense heavenly bodies, but to regulate the motion of the earth; to produce the other effects which some of them evidently have, and all of them in a greater or smaller proportion may have on the earth; and to raise in man that idea of the magnificence, power, and skill of the Creator, which the contemplation of the immensity, motion, order, beauty, and utility of these bodies must produce.

It is because we know not whether those bodies are inhabited, that we cannot pronounce, that the utility they bring us, is or is not the only end of creating them. If they are inhabited, the inhabitants must be of a texture very different from those of the earth. But we cannot deem it impossible, that beings may have been made, fit to reside, to act, and to think, in the very centre, as well as on the surface of the sun.

But, without determining that question, which the scantiness of our lights will not permit us to decide;

it is obvious, that, besides the physical influence which these bodies may have on the earth, and on us, it must have been one, and that no inconsiderable end of the making them, to help man to such an idea as has been mentioned of the Creator.

It is rash to say, that any one part of the furniture of this earth is useless; that there is not some utility in the various soils and metals; or that the different plants, insects, reptiles, fish, fowls, quadrupeds, are not necessary for certain purposes, though we have not yet discovered them. Who will deny usefulness to poisonous plants; or dare affirm that moths, rats, toads, vipers, and other vermin, have not been intended for proper and fit uses? It is bold to assert, that the least animalcule discovered by the microscope, has not its proper use in nature.

It seems unreasonable to say, that God framed all the ornament of this earth, to satisfy himself that he could do it; since he perfectly knew, that he could do every thing that does not involve contradiction.

But, as the whole frame of this earth, so far as we know it, and every plant and living creature that are supported by it, are, to man, strict and very obvious demonstrations of the power and wisdom of the Creator; as the œconomy and disposition of the whole is of his goodness; it seems reasonable to conclude, that one, possibly the chief end of creating those things, was, to shew God to man.

Most of the productions of the earth, are one way or another for the use of animals. Many animals are the food of other animals; and, to be sure, so intended by the Maker. Man, as an animal, has his share of the leguminous, as well as of animal food. Every living creature wants nourishment, and finds it ready provided; but all have not eyes to see the bountiful hand that reaches it. Man has his provision in common with the other animals; but then he

has eyes that may, and, if he do not shut them, must see the hand from which it comes. On the brute therefore, who cannot know his benefactor, there is no obligation to duty or gratitude; on man, who may and ought to know, there is and must be. Why then may it not be fairly concluded, that one of the chief ends of crowding the earth with so many wonders of the vegetable and animal kind, is to fill the head of man with admiration, and his heart with gratitude?

It is rash to say, that the bee knows, or makes use of any geometrical principles in the formation of its hexagonal cells; or that it is from any physical knowledge of the properties of flowers, that it is directed to cull the sweets that yield its honey from some, neglecting others. It is rash to affirm, that the various tribes of spiders consider, and, from reflection and by mechanical rules, frame those nets of different forms and sizes, that catch their vagrant prey. It is rash to suppose, that the swallows, the crows, the magpies, frame their nests, and make choice of that situation, from any antecedent reasoning what is fittest to be done, or from any architectonical notions. It is neither reflection nor hunger that moves the cat to lie in wait so patiently and so attentively for the mouse or the rat. These actions they exert, probably because they are directed by their frame to exert them; and to that disposition we give the name of *Instinct*.

It is false to say, that men desire to eat and drink, from knowing that doing so is necessary to preserve their lives; or that they have a desire for the other sex, from a design of propagating the species. These dispositions flow from their make: they hunger, they thirst, they lust, whether they would or would not. In these things, and some others, they are moved by their frame as brutes are.

But, laying aside these natural, or rather mechanical dispositions, man compared with brutes is much at a loss, except in so far as reason and reflection come to his assistance. He has no instinct to determine him what to eat, what to avoid eating. It is but a small part of the globe, if any, that can afford man fruits or legumens to support him the whole year round. His make is not fit for catching animals to live on, were he naturally carnivorous. No instinct, such as appears in other animals, directs him to this or that sort of habitation; and were he not directed by experience and reflection, he must quickly perish.

Man comes into the world much more helpless, and continues so much longer than any other animal we know. Without the care of his parents he must be soon lost; and without the instruction which their experience enables them to afford his reason, he must continue miserable, until his own experience and observation yield matter for his reason to work on. He therefore was evidently so framed, as to be obliged to follow reason for his guide; whereas all the other animals had their guide in their texture and constitution.

No animal but man wants clothing, other than nature has provided for it. Man can hardly live in any part of the globe, unless he find clothing for himself.

No animal but man stands in need of cookery, or any other preparation for his food, but what it has from nature. Man must prepare every thing almost, except fruits and legumes, before they are fit for his service. Grain must be ground and baked; all sort of meat must be altered in its condition by fire; and I doubt salt must by industry be found or made, before the nourishment be proper for man.

No climate yields spontaneously food sufficient for man, though all do for the brutes that inhabit them.

Man does not cultivate the ground, nor find supplies for his wants, from instinct, but from observation and reasoning.

Reason in him must answer the end of instinct in brutes. He sees trees and all vegetables spring from seeds; if he would have plenty, he must plant or sow. He sees grains and fruits fall and perish, unless they are gathered and preserved; and he sees the ant industriously gathering and laying up stores. These observations must lead him to produce and save corns, &c. Cold makes clothing necessary; the spider's thread and web furnish matter for his fancy, and spinning and weaving are invented. Floods, and storms, and winter make shelter necessary. The swallow makes use of mortar, the crow of sticks for its nest: man's invention improves on their instinct; at first huts rise, and at last palaces.

Instinct carries brutes no farther than to what is fit and necessary: Reason carries man so far; but then it, or at least it prompted by vanity, carries him much farther. In place of warm clothing, which nature requires, vanity will have it rich and gaudy. The blush of the rose, the plume of the peacock, and the shining wing of the butterfly, must be imitated to deck our fine ladies, and our much finer young gentlemen. In place of convenient mansions, we must have sumptuous palaces, crusted with marble, and shining with gold. In place of food fitted for our stomachs by roasting and boiling, we run into the most ridiculous gratification of extravagant taste, by unnatural mixtures, that distress the stomach. And in place of using wine, and strong drink, our own invention, for necessary purposes, if any such there are, we make them the instruments of debauch, the means of debasing our understanding, and destroying our health.

Happy brutes! unhappy man! their instinct carries them to what is fit and convenient for them; but it carries them no farther; it leads them to nothing that undoes them. His reason supplies in him the lack of instinct, and leads him to every thing that is necessary or convenient; nay, bounds him to that when duly made use of. His reason, besides supplying the place of instinct, was clearly intended for opening to him a scene of very delightful employment; the contemplation of the works of God, the reflection on his boundless might, wisdom, and goodness, and the enjoyment of his favour. But unluckily this last has long ceased to be any part of his business. His reason is made use of indeed, by all means, whether right or wrong, to purchase things necessary and convenient; but he does not stop there. He seldom ever makes use of it to prevent the abuse of these conveniences: on the contrary, he employs it in contriving means to raise and to gratify unnatural appetites, by which his constitution is hurt. And he seems to have no other view in the conduct of his life, but to satisfy those vicious and destructive inclinations, which he himself has raised, and substituted in the room of those which reason was intended to lead him to.

Brutes are by nature sufficiently supplied with necessities, and with instinct to teach them to make use of them; and if they had eyes to see the Author of nature, they surely would be thankful. Man is richly supplied by nature; and, in place of instinct, has reason to teach him to apply to his use and convenience what nature has produced. He has besides eyes to see the Author of nature, and of his blessings, the giver of that reason that helps him to turn the product of the earth to his account; and he has in his make a disposition to gratitude, as well as he knows, that acknowledgment, thankfulness, and compliance with the will of his Maker and Benefactor, is his duty.

But, alas! how seldom does he suffer that disposition to be brought by reason to act? How little is he employed in thinking on nature, with a view to discover and admire its Author? and how small is his concern for the will, for the honour of that Being by whose power and bounty he subsists?

Because he can raise plants, and gather fruits and seeds; because he can convert these seeds and fruits into bread and wine; because he can manufacture silk, wool, and flax; because he can smelt minerals, and produce a sort of new species of metals; and because he can, by making use of his reason, procure a vast variety of gratifications to his taste, and to his vanity, he forgets the Being whose gift that reason was: he is apt to look upon himself as the creator of all those things that afford him subsistence or gratification, and on them as his creatures: he thinks it lawful to make use of his own to any excess: and he at last drops into an opinion, that true felicity consists in the gratification of all appetites, at any expence, without regard to right or wrong; and that every thing that may safely be done to compass that gratification, is lawful.

When this comes to be the settled disposition of the mind; when the bias of the heart is the gratification of all lusts and appetites; when the gratification of these lusts and appetites is directly adversary to what right reason says is the will of God, and inconsistent with what it says would have been our chief felicity, even in this life, had we pursued it; no one can wonder, that right reason is not consulted, or its voice listened unto; or that the crowd especially of the giddy and vitious, shun all correspondence with reason, all sort of meditation; and in place thereof, when they are satiated with the gratification of grosser appetites for the time, and cannot proceed farther in the enjoyment, they take up with play, or other the

most silly, if not offensive amusements, rather than be left alone in the hands of their own conscience and reflections.

Thus has reason, the highest gift that God has been pleased to bestow on men, by the perversity of foolish guilty man become the instrument of his misery. Reason was given him, in place of instinct, to direct his choice; which was left free, that he might deserve, and be rewarded for doing well: reason was given, to guard him against the prevalence of lusts and appetites, and to lead him to the chief felicity his nature was capable of: reason was given, to let him see the order, the beauty, and the magnificence of the works of God; and thereby to discover the excellency, the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of that self-existent Being: reason was given, to shew him his immediate dependence on his Creator for every blessing he enjoyed, as well as the capacity of enjoying them; and to fill his soul with gratitude for the overflowing bounty of his Maker: and reason was given him, to complete and secure his felicity, by a settled confidence in the favour and protection of the Almighty, so long as he made use of it to control and correct disorderly appetites; and to answer the end of his creation, in admiring, reverencing, and adoring that source of perfection, mercy, and goodness. But, alas! to what miserable purposes has wretched man employed this mighty boon of heaven! reason, in place of restraining, has been made use of to encourage lusts and appetites, by inventing incentives to them: in place of leading men to see their duty, and the true object of their felicity, it has been employed in contriving means to divert the attention from looking at either: nay, in place of discovering the boundless perfections of God, the absolute dependence of man, and the necessary connection between right and wrong and rewards and punishments, it has been fatally made use

of to hide the Deity from the sight of men, to erect man into an independent being, to abolish all hopes and fears of rewards or punishments, and to make felicity consist in what is truly the dishonour of the human nature.

Amazing as this phænomenon is, nothing is more certainly true; nor has any effect in nature a more shameful, a more pitiful cause.

Appetites were given to man, to prompt him to preserve himself, and to continue the species. The natural calls to eat, to drink, to propagate the species, were necessary; else man employed in contemplation, would soon have ceased to be. The acts of eating, drinking, copulating, without the natural stimulus, have nothing inviting in them. And it is an instance of the benignity of the Creator, that the gratification of those necessary appetites is attended with a very sensible pleasure, which rewards the obeying of nature's call; as it is an instance of his wisdom, that when the ends of these natural calls are answered, satiety ensues, and the objects coveted lose their charm and cannot be so much as thought of with any relish, until nature has farther occasion for them.

The desire of knowledge, the effect of discerning and reasoning, was implanted to prompt man to employ those faculties by which the Deity, and what is owing to him, might be discovered. And here again the goodness of the divine Being is manifest, in annexing to the gratification of that desire the calmest and most lasting satisfaction, without that alloy which attends the gratification of their other, carnal, appetites; and with this singularity, that the desire of knowledge is insatiable, and, like its object, infinite; rewarding nevertheless the seeker after knowledge with very sensible pleasure in every step of his pursuit.

The desire of preserving life, (not to speak of the

natural impulse to avoid ill), is the result of the pleasures and enjoyments of both kinds provided for man in this life.

And the desire of approbation, is the incentive planted in man by his Maker, to dispose him to do his duty; which is immediately rewarded by the calm satisfaction that warms his heart upon having done it. The approbation of the Author and Maker of all things, must be of infinite consequence to the creature; and the consciousness of having gained that approbation, must yield the purest joy.

The other dispositions, or what are called passions of the mind, such as, anger, fear, love, hatred, &c. have been placed in man for noble, and for salutary ends; not only as they respect man's duty to the Deity, but as they regard society: though those also, as man has unhappily contrived the matter, in place of promoting the ends for which they were meant, hurry man on to misery, and give birth to many disorders in society.

Now, thus qualified for happiness, what has man done to enjoy, or to preserve it? why, truly, finding an immediate pleasure attendant upon the gratification of sensual appetites, he is disposed to place his happiness in them: finding that pains and industry must be used to supply what his appetites crave, he bestows all his time and action in that pursuit: finding that, employing his reason, he can refine upon the common gratification of those appetites, by inventing new meats, new drinks, new sauces; by procuring variety of women; by erecting palaces; by picture; by sculpture; by music; and by numberless arts, to please and to amuse, his reason is made use of to those purposes only: and finding, that by the use of reason, he can not only arrive at those things, but that, tho' he is far from being the strongest of animals, he, by employing it, is more powerful than they are all put

together; that he is their lord and master, and they subservient to his uses; that he can blow up rocks, alter the course of rivers, lock up the sea in basons, join, in a manner, distant continents by ships; that he can imitate thunder, and lay whole countries waste; and that those things he can do without any immediate controul or check from the Author of nature; he is apt to think he owes all these advantages and prerogatives to himself, and to that reason which distinguishes him from the rest of the visible creation; and, on that supposal, to conclude, that no return of duty or gratitude is due to that superior Being, from whom his reason and all his real enjoyments flow.

As the firm belief of this conclusion is absolutely necessary towards quieting his mind, in the career of brutal folly in which he is engaged, reason, that unfortunate tool, is made use of on every occasion to blind its owner. It was given by the Creator to be his guide; and it ought to be so: if duly made use of and attended to, it would be so. But, as man has contrived to manage matters, it is listened to only when it suggests what is fit to sooth him in his foolish shameful courses. On such occasions it is the sole and sovereign rule. But if it presumes to check him; if it insinuates, that he is no more than a poor dependent creature, debtor to the supreme Being, and consequently accountable for every talent, every blessing, every enjoyment; that suggestion is straightway treated as the offspring, not of manly reason, but of mean dastardly fear; a melancholy conceit, nursed up in sickly imaginations; which had its origin in certain inventions of cunning lawgivers, who, to keep their people in order, and in obedience to the laws established by them, published notions of right and wrong, and of rewards and punishments, which, conveyed down by tradition, have gained credit with the weak, to the great disturbance of their quiet, and pass

for realities with enthusiasts. Unhappy man! fatal effect of prejudice: reason, the sovereign rule, is to be followed, and allowed that name, or rejected, and called the fruit of melancholy or enthusiasm, as it does or does not conform itself to prejudices.

But what is the most amazing on this article is, that in proportion as men are, or imagine they are possessed of knowledge, and of the art of reasoning, in an eminent degree, their abuse of that knowledge, and of the reasoning faculty, to the prejudice of the end to which it was chiefly meant, is the more conspicuous. In antient times, which are now called times of ignorance, when men did not pique themselves on the deep knowledge, and the profound skill in reasoning, which we boast of at this time, there was a general disposition to reverence the Creator, and a professed infidel was hardly to be met with. But, in these our days of supposed knowledge, the guise is sadly changed. Except amongst those called ignorant, not many are to be found that do, or pretend to believe in God.

From the beginning, a rational being, unaided by learning, and the experience of former ages, could easily discern the hand of an intelligent, wise, powerful, and very bountiful Creator, in the whole and in every part of the fabric of this system that fell under his ken; and could as easily discover his own obligations to, and his dependence on that Being. And accordingly we see, by the earliest accounts of time that have come to our hands, all mankind, full of a persuasion of their dependence, full of reverence to the Deity, soliciting his favour and protection by prayer, by ceremonies, by sacrifices, sometimes human, nay of their first-born; and imputing all their favourable or cross incidents that happened to them, to the good-will or displeasure of the sovereign Being, whom it was their chief study to placate.

It is true, that the notions they generally entertained of the Deity were imperfect, as well as their manner of serving him corrupted; circumstances that can easily be accounted for from the weakness and perverseness of those who took the lead in directing their religious opinions and practices. But still it is undeniably true, that the gross of mankind were serious in their belief of the existence of a Deity, of their dependence on him, and of the occasion they had for his protection and favour.

To this general disposition of mankind it was in part owing, that the gospel, upon its first publication, made so rapid and so surprising progress. No man, at that time, doubted of the existence of a Deity, or of man's dependence on him. It was easy to satisfy every one who admitted these propositions, that mankind, by the corruption into which they had fallen, stood mightily in need of some intercessor, some mean by which they might be saved from the weight of their sins. and it is no marvel, that evidence given to men so convinced, that salvation might be had through Jesus, should be received with gladness.

And accordingly we see, that, in a trifle of time, the herd of mankind, in defiance of all discouragements, and of the most severe persecutions, from power, greedily embraced and professed this faith; and continued stedfastly in the profession of it, notwithstanding the monstrous absurdities with which the teachers of that faith loaded it, and the more monstrous and shocking lives and manners of the teachers; until of late years, that what ought to have been improved into a blessing to mankind, has unfortunately turned out to their destruction.

In the period just mentioned, wicked and voluptuous men pursued wicked and voluptuous courses; and many gross villanies and abuses were daily committed by profligate men, which the degenerate con-

dition of mankind produced. But still these wickednesses were disguised, disowned, or somehow sought to be atoned for. The villain dissembled at least, and was forced to be so mean as to become a hypocrite. No man dreamed of professing openly, that he denied the being of a God, or his dependence on, and being accountable to him. And if any one was indeed so foolish, as well as impious, as to entertain such a notion, (which, by the by, is with me a question), there was no temptation for uttering it; because there was no chance that any one should concur in supporting such an opinion.

But of late the case is surprisingly, and sadly altered, by the very mean that ought to have produced the contrary effect; increase in knowledge, from the more careful observation of nature, and from the perusal of the works of the learned in all ages.

Whatever degree of acquisition of knowledge from experience, the longevity of the antediluvians might have rendered practicable for any particular person, it is certain, that the short period to which men's lives are now, and have for some thousands of years been limited, does not permit any individual to lay in any considerable stock of knowledge. And if he will know much, he must profit of others, his contemporaries; or of those that went before him, by tradition, or by writing.

Hence all arts have been perfected by degrees. The experience of one age adds to that of another. And if the discoveries of our forefathers had not been handed down to us by writing or tradition, we should be as rude and unlearned as the most barbarous of them were.

After writing became fashionable among the ancients, the experience, the reasoning, and discoveries of one age, were transmitted to, and improved on by the next. The inquisitive became diligent in perusing

the discoveries of former times: philosophy became mightily in vogue; and it was no uncommon thing for men of parts, to dedicate their whole time to the contemplation of nature, and to place their whole felicity in employing all their mental faculties in the investigation of truth.

As pursuits of this kind are of all others the most noble, and the most suited to a rational being, they soon became the most honourable. Philosophers were held to be *wise men*, and were called so *tout court*; as undoubtedly they held themselves to be, though modestly they contented themselves with the appellation of *lovers of wisdom* only; and the vanity they had in being very much more knowing than other people, and in being thought by others *wise*, was the chief reward they had for their labour, and contributed not a little to run them into the vain opinion, that they were in very deed *wise*, and that their skill and wisdom could answer all purposes.

In all arts and sciences, so far as the observations they were possessed of afforded materials, they reasoned accurately. In morality, and the whole system of duties which men owe reciprocally to each other, and which members owe to the society whereof they are part, they acquitted themselves well. Brutal appetites and enjoyments they saw, and reproached the meanness of; the superior happiness which the right exercise of the understanding yields, they felt and recommended. Reason, in contradistinction to appetites and passions, was their sovereign guide; and felicity was to be attained by following its dictates. Social and public virtues had, according to their notions, charms sufficient to make the possessor of them happy, and to secure against all wants, pains, and distresses.

But though their sagacity and attention discovered and described the beauty of virtue, and the deformity

of vice; though they defined with precision the limits of social and political duty; and though it was the labour of their lives, to recommend what was good, and to dissuade from what was evil: yet it unluckily so happened, that the learning and reason which they valued themselves upon, never once led them to the reflections for which they were principally intended, on the excellencies and manifest attributes of the Author of the creation, on the necessary dependence of man upon his favour, and on the duty thence resulting to the Deity. Such reflections would have been fit to humble their vanity, and to have checked them in the course of pursuits, which though not openly vitious, yet had nothing of that reverence and attention that is due to the Deity mixed with them.

So soon as these wise philosophers had got that quantity of knowledge which in their apprehensions placed them above other men, and had got into a high opinion of their own reason; they no longer employed their parts in attending to and investigating the wondrous effects of wisdom, power, and goodness, displayed in the fabric of this universe, in order to raise high and honourable ideas of the Almighty, and becoming notions of man's meanness, short-sightedness, and dependence: but, rejecting such poor-spirited reflections, they took it in their heads to imagine, that the profusion of wonders in the works of creation was intended only for an exercise to their understanding, to discover how, by what mechanism, and for what ends such things were brought about. They found out they had not power sufficient to produce them; but on the all-sufficiency of their reason they depended: and therefore to work they went, to discover, and to explain nature. Hence so many *cosmogonia's*, so many systems for shewing how the various *phænomena* are performed. Some set out on *hypotheses* which time has discovered to be abso-

lutely false. Some gave only words, which had no certain meaning, and therefore explained nothing; but which the philosopher and his followers were perfectly satisfied with. And all of them agreed in this, that their reason was a match for the undertaking; that is, fit to investigate and describe all the mysteries of nature, and to discover and determine all the ways and works of God.

With this prepossession in behalf of the powers of their reason, these wise gentlemen undertook to inquire into the nature of God; laying it down as a fixed point, to admit no quality in that Being that their reason did not assign him; nor to allow any action to him, but what they, making use of their reason and other observation, could assign the cause and end of.

On these articles the difference of opinion was great. Some held the world to be eternal; and the infinite variety and contrivance, to be the effect of nature, eternal also: and with this sound, in place of sense, they were satisfied. Some held the world to be the work of an intelligent being: but the number of them was few; and what regard he had to men in the composition, they did not say. Some held that the Deity directed events in this world, particularly those that regarded nations and societies: others utterly denied Providence; and imagined, that every thing was left to the government of chance. Few philosophers allowed of a future state of rewards and punishments: those that did, thought only of rewarding public virtues, and punishing vices noxious to society. None of them imagined that God ever minded the inward disposition, or heart of man.

As Epicurus and his followers observed, that no signal punishment attended vice in this world, they denied Providence; as they could not be satisfied that the dead could rise, they denied a future state;

and as there was no punishment that actually attended vicious actions in this world or another, all actions with them were indifferent. So that this sect, which was numerous, discarded the Deity, and made brutes of men.

But it is impossible they could have dropt into such monstrous absurdities, if the vain voluptuous course in which they were engaged, had not given a bias to their reason; and if they had not made reason so much the test and touchstone of all things, as to reject every thing which it could frame any objection to, if it could not also, by its own light, dissolve that objection.

Had they duly attended to the popular opinions which prevailed in their days, that the gods regarded the actions of men; that good actions were pleasing, and evil displeasing to the Deity; that sins, unless expiated, were to be punished; and that rewards and punishments were to be met with in another state: had they with care considered the essential difference between good and evil actions; the monstrous absurdity which attends the supposal, that wickedness can go unpunished, or virtue unrewarded; and the necessary consequence from thence, that there must be another time for those rewards and punishments, as they do not happen in this life: and had they permitted themselves to see, without prejudice, the numberless obligations, unacknowledged and unreturned, under which man lies to his Creator and Preserver, and the infinite disproportion there is between our weak scanty reason and his boundless wisdom, it is impossible they could have fallen into a set of such childish opinions as they maintained.

But they were too much bewitched with the chimerical notions they had of their own excellency; too fond of the character they had carved out for themselves, after driving the Deity from their

thoughts, of being lords of the creation, the chief of beings, accountable to none, happy in themselves, entitled to gratify every appetite, and subject to no law but that of their own good-will and pleasure, to submit to the mortification that must result from the discovery of their real state. The misery into which folly had plunged human nature, must be a disagreeable object of contemplation to a vain man who had got himself into possession of the seat of God. The necessity of humiliation, repentance, amendment, intercession, and of a total alteration of views and pursuits, was a pill of no easy digestion. And therefore it is no great wonder, that though, on the first publication of the gospel, the good tidings were greedily received by the unlearned, and consequently less prejudiced, the philosophers, and their scholars, the pretended learned men of the world, resisted it with the greatest warmth and bitterness.

It was however lucky, that though the infidelity of the antient philosophers was almost as strong as that of the modern, it was by much less extensive; and therefore less mischievous. Learning in those days was confined to a few heads; books were scarce, and the purchase of them cost a great deal of money: every body did not meddle with philosophising, as they do at present; and, of consequence, knowledge of the philosophical kind was only to be met with amongst philosophers who taught, and such of their hearers as had leisure, genius, and books, to enable them to prosecute their studies. The herd of the people remained ignorant and undebauched; and the Christian doctrine, which took root amongst them, when it called in unprejudiced reason, and learning, to assist it, proved at last too strong for the few fantastic proud philosophers.

Thus was infidelity, that is, in theory and opinion, banished from the Christian world, till of late, that a

false opinion has prevailed, that with the restoration of learning, the knowledge of mankind has enlarged itself infinitely; that this is the effect of genius and reason; and that making a proper use of this reason, every thing that is, or appears to be mysterious in nature, may to a certainty, at least to a very high degree of probability, be discovered. And this false opinion has unfortunately become so prevalent and extensive, that, except amongst the meaner and the less conceited part of mankind, it is not easy to meet with any one that is not tainted with it.

This mischief is however by no means to be charged upon learning, but on the weakness and prejudices of mankind; who, conceiving too high an opinion of the powers of their own understanding, presume to measure every thing, divine as well as human, by it. For when first the subversion of the Greek empire drove learned men, with their books, into the West, which fell in with the time of the invention of printing, whereby knowledge was circulated, and could be come at much cheaper, and with less labour, than formerly, great numbers of men of genius applied themselves to study, and in a trifle of time acquired so much knowledge, as disposed them to throw off the yoke, as well as the absurdities of the church of Rome; which would have had a thorough effect, but for the passions and interests of selfish princes. But in this attack on the reigning church, infidelity had no sort of hand. Learning had warmed the piety, as well as it improved the knowledge of the Reformers; a thorough examination of the scriptures, of history, and of antiquity, independent of the tradition of the church, secured and defined their faith: and piety in those days was the companion of knowledge and learning; as it must ever continue to be where knowledge and learning are lodged in sober minds.

The quick and easy conveyance of knowledge by the press, soon produced in all soils swarms of men of real or pretended learning. Curiosity, genius, or the fashion, (for it was the mode then to study), filled Europe with men of letters. Sciences of all sorts were pursued by people of all countries, as their tastes severally led them; all the antient learning was exposed to view; in theology, the progress just ascribed was made; the Roman law was studied, and taught with great accuracy; the Greek and Roman oratory and poetry became the standards of performances of that kind; the Greek, particularly Aristotle's philosophy, reigned in the schools; Hippocrates, Galen, Celsus, &c. gave lights to physicians which they had not before; and the works of the antient astronomers and mathematicians which remain, revived those studies; in which, by the assiduous application of ingenious men, very great progress has been made.

It must be owned, that, in almost every branch of learning, knowledge has been carried to a higher pitch, since the revival of learning, than it appears to have been by the antients, from the remains of their works that have come to our hands. But that is not to be ascribed to the superiority of genius of the moderns; since the true cause of it can easily be assigned, *i. e.* that multitudes are at work on the same subject; and that the press affords so quick a conveyance of their conceptions and observations to each other, that they are thereby vastly aided in their lucubrations. Besides that many accidental discoveries by men not always of the brightest parts, have given hints, and struck out lights to the ingenious, which have led to considerable improvements, and have banished many false systems.

Accident gave birth to the invention of telescopes, and of microscopes; and yet to the first is owing the confirmation of the Copernican, and the ruin of the

Ptolomean system; and to the second, the confirmation of Dr. Hervey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, as well as the production to view of numberless tribes of animals, hitherto hid from mortal sight. Accident gave birth to the invention of gunpowder, and of the air-pump; and experiments made on these have disclosed many unknown properties of the air. Experiments to which men have been led by accidents, have made surprising discoveries in chymistry, and many parts of natural philosophy, to the great improvement of physic, and other branches of useful knowledge. And the accidental discovery of the West-Indies, and the intercourse by trade with it, and with the East-Indies, have brought numbers of particulars to light, to which the antients were utter strangers.

Possessed of the learning of the antients, with the vast addition of later discoveries, it is not to be wondered at, if the moderns exceeded the antients as much in vanity, and the good opinion they entertained of their own capacity, as they did in knowledge. Hence they employed, with great industry, their time and their talents in searches after the secrets of nature, and in discovering and assigning the physical causes of the effects that shine forth in the universe. Descartes's new Cosmogonia beat Aristotle's, and all the other antient systems, out of the schools. The artifice employed by the Creator, in the formation of the universe, in the direction, and the preservation of it, was described, and laid open to the comprehension of the meanest capacity; the physical causes of the ebbing and flowing of the sea, of magnetism, of the formation of metals, and of all the other seeming mysteries of nature, were assigned; and, to the conviction of the inventers, and of almost all Europe, for about half a century, nothing was wanted but the application of his principles, to account for every

phenomenon, how surprising soever, that should at any time make its appearance.

Whilst the world was drunk with this conceit, no marvel they should entertain a very high opinion of the sagacity of man. If his power was not to be compared with that of the Omnipotent, yet his wisdom and knowledge did not seem to fall far short of that of the Omniscient. A well-instructed and well-convinced Cartesian would not think himself hard put to it by the questions about the formation of natural things which the Almighty put to Job, to humble his pride, and to convince him, that he was not a competent judge of the ways and views of God. And thence it naturally followed, that they looked down, with some contempt, upon such parts of the scripture as appeared to them unphilosophical, entertained a poor opinion of the writers of them, and laughed at the simplicity of serious Christians, who believed several articles, in matters of religion, which those wise men could not account for so well, as they could for the formation of the universe, and the various *phenomena* of nature.

To this way of thinking their master's first principle led them. *Quicquid clarè et distinctè percipio, est verum*, was the foundation on which he built, and a good one. He surely ran no risk in admitting whatever was founded on it. In all the parts of mathematics, in which he excelled, the converting the proposition, and admitting nothing to be true but what one clearly perceives to be so, is the rule which has guided such as followed it to that degree of certainty which has distinguished those sciences from all others. The object of them admits of the application of the rule. Lines, angles, numbers, the creatures of man's imagination, defined by him, and receiving their nature from that definition, he may clearly conceive all the properties of; and is in the right to deny to any

line, angle, or number, what he does not clearly perceive to belong to it. But if he carries this rule to other sciences, where the discovery of truth depends upon a different species of evidence: if he applies it to the works or ways of the Most High, which his knowledge does not reach to, as it does to the properties of lines and numbers, beings of his own creation; and of which he cannot possibly know any thing but what he gathers from conjecture, founded on the appearances in nature, or from what the Deity may have been pleased to reveal; monstrous mistakes may, and must grow. A thousand improbable, nay almost inconceivable things, in natural philosophy, are true. The testimony of the senses confutes all objections from improbability, or inconceivability, if one may use the expression; and credible evidence short of that of seeing or feeling, from unsuspected witnesses, creates that certainty on which men may safely depend and act. And if it has pleased the Almighty to discover to mankind any thing relating to himself or to his ways, it is but of little consequence, whether that falls in with the philosophers notions or conceptions; and the only sensible question can be, Whether there is sufficient evidence that in fact such things were revealed?

Notwithstanding these obvious reflections, Mons. Descartes and his followers, and the other sects of philosophers who have succeeded him, not content with world-making, have proceeded to god-making. They have presumed to define him, his attributes and powers; nay, they have determined what he is and must be, and what he is not and cannot be, with such precision and certainty, that if any thing said to be revealed by himself, does not conform directly to the character and qualities they have given this god, they straightway contest, and, right or wrong, reject the evidence for such revelation.

Descartes's romance kept entire possession of men's belief for full fifty years. If some cross experiment shocked it in some particular, the system was pieced up and mended by his followers, and accommodated to the new-discovered *phenomena*; till at last the tide of contrary observations and experiments was too strong to be resisted. All the invention of his countrymen the French, could not prop the theory that experiment demonstrated to be false: and what was worst of all for France, it was crushed under the weight of another theory, built on the discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton, an Englishman.

The sagacity of Sir Isaac was admired by all, and adored by his countrymen. His genius pushed him to discoveries in the most abstruse parts of the mathematics, that have caused the astonishment of the learned; and at the same time, from accurate observations made on nature, he has given hints, which, though by him flung out in the form of queries only, his countrymen have converted into so many certain propositions; and upon them have founded what they pretend to be a complete theory or system, which future experiments and discovery must try the solidity of. But it must be owned Sir Isaac's modesty was much greater than that of his followers, not only in the title he gave to his notions, but in the respect with which, notwithstanding his vast genius and superior knowledge, he treated the Deity and the scriptures.

It is truly amazing, that the series of blunders which the most exalted geniuses who applied themselves to system-making have by late discoveries been found to have dropt into one after another, has not cured the philosophers of our time of the high conceit they have entertained of the compass and all-sufficiency of the human understanding, and of the madness of the undertaking, to trace, with the organs

which we have got, the hidden wonders of the material creation; especially since the more light we gain into natural things by accidental discoveries, the thicker the difficulties pour themselves on us, and the more inexplicable these mysteries appear to be.

About the beginning of the last century, natural philosophers had nothing to exercise their talents on, but such *phenomena* as fell within their senses, unaided by instruments, and such observations as were without very great care or accuracy made accidentally on such things as gave surprize on account of their singularity. But since that time, the microscope has unveiled a sort of new creation, at least a very remarkable part of it, till then unknown; the telescope has discovered new worlds in the skies; and improvements in mathematicks and astronomy, have shewed the size and distance of those worlds. The inconceivable minuteness of the microscopic animals, of the parts whereof they are composed, of their juices and nutriment, and the delicacy of the artifice that has produced and supports them, strikes the mind with as strong a sense of the plenitude of skill and power of the Creator, as the grandeur and magnificence of the new discoveries in the skies does of his immensity; and both are equally fit to give to man the most humbling view of his own knowledge and penetration, as well as of his power, when compared with those of the Almighty.

The air-pump, experiments made therein, and others to which these gave rise, have discovered many properties of the air, heretofore unknown, which shew the admirable sagacity of that Being by whose astonishing contrivance that fluid is so adjusted and tempered, as in effect to support the animal as well as the vegetable world, and to maintain this part of the creation in the condition in which it is.

Chymistry pursued with attention, has discovered many effects of fire, and of mixtures, and general properties in metals, minerals, and other bodies, that give daily surprize; anatomy has to a certain pitch laid open the astonishing artifice of the Creator, in the texture of the body of man, as well as of other animals; a prism in Sir Isaac Newton's hand has disclosed many qualities in light, which never had entered into the heart of man to think of; and some accidental experiments in electricity have presented to the senses, appearances which shew, that there are some powers and properties in matter not hitherto dreamed of, and which no theory as yet hatched can account for.

The natural effect of those discoveries upon minds rightly disposed, ought to be, to mortify self-conceit, and to exalt our idea of the infinite power and perfection of the Creator; since the greater progress we make in discovering, the more wonders of contrivance, wisdom, power, and goodness we meet with, which though our reason can sometimes see the end of, it is too scanty to trace the mechanical cause of; and for that must resort to the will and pleasure of the Deity, unless we will be so absurd as to say, that nature, without any meaning or contrivance, has bestowed those properties and powers upon certain parcels of matter.

That dense bodies gravitate in proportion to their mass, and that projected bodies continue in motion until obstructed, are appearances so common, that no one is surpris'd with the observation; and the crowd do not trouble their head in inquiring after the causes. But it is not so with the clear-sighted philosophers. They must puzzle their brains with assigning the mechanical causes for those effects; and when they have done their best, they must confess their ignorance, or risk error, by averring that there is no me-

chanical cause; and that the effect depends on a law of nature, which those who are disposed to be civil to the Deity say, flows from the mere will of the Deity.

In the same way, every man living is sensible of the intimate connection between the soul and the body; he feels the sensation raised in the one by the action of the other, and knows the ready obedience which such parts of the body as are intended for action yield to the will of the soul: but how the one acts upon the other, is not only not known, but, one may venture to say, not knowable or conceivable by us, until we acquire some degree of knowledge of what we are at present mere strangers to, the nature of *soul*, and the nature of *body*.

A body fit to reflect light and colours, when placed in light, not only returns the rays of light that fall upon it, to the luminous body that enlightened it, but sends the picture of itself quite round the hemisphere in all directions, and to every point: placing a thousand, a million of such bodies near one another, each performs the same operation; the rays of light and colours come instantaneously to the spectator's eye from each, without being disturbed or diverted in the passage by the numberless rays returned, in different and contrary directions, by the other contiguous bodies. That the Being who contrived this mechanism, and created the machine, can explain it, and can give us capacity to comprehend it, is not to be doubted: but until it shall be his good pleasure to do so, all we have to do is, to admire his power and skill, and thankfully to acknowledge the blessing he has bestowed upon us by this astonishing machinery.

Why then, what has man got by the numerous experiments and discoveries of later years? Why, surely, a more accurate and certain knowledge of many *phenomena* of nature, of many of the works of God,

than the antients had, and a more distinct view of the ends and uses of many pieces and parts of the creation than men were formerly possessed of: discoveries fit to raise the most high and honourable notions of the Creator, and of his goodness to his creatures; and to convince man of his short-sightedness, dependence, and duty.

But has man made this improvement of those discoveries? Nothing less! He makes a pompous muster to his own vain mind of his knowledge; he looks upon it as his property, acquired by his own ingenuity and industry; he prides himself on his sagacity, and hopes by its assistance to be still richer in wisdom; and he feels so much pleasure in the pursuit of more knowledge, and takes so much joy upon every trifling discovery which adds to his store, that he cannot think with patience on the evidence which his increase in knowledge gives of his real ignorance and weakness, nor on the infinite perfection and goodness of the Deity, which that knowledge demonstrates. Such reflections would shock his vanity; would convince him he had passed his life unprofitably; and might determine him to quit his beloved course of philosophizing, or other courses still more foolish; or else to persist in them, under a load of anxious doubts which might pall the taste of his enjoyments.

He must be a stranger to the exercise of the rational faculty, who does not know, that the pursuit of *knowledge* in any science is attended with very sensible pleasure: or who doubts, that a philosopher, if blessed with health, and means, and temperance, may reasonably propose to drive on in the career of life till nature decay, with as much satisfaction as any man who does not confidently look for a happy *hereafter*. And as this is the case, supposing a philosopher engaged in this pleasurable course, it is not to be imagined, that he would quit it willingly, or listen, with-

out some reluctance, to doctrines that should make him uneasy in it. With such prejudice does almost every philosopher of our days attend to what he daily hears preached, and what the voice of all nature proclaims, of the duties which men owe to their Creator, of the regard which he expects from them to his will, and of the certainty of rewards and punishments; and is therefore fertile in objections, to prevent his own and other people's believing these truths.

And what puts our age in a much more lamentable case than those that were before it is, that whereas the number of philosophers formerly was but very small, the number of pretended philosophers is now immensely great; and whereas books and learning were then in a few hands, at present almost every body can read. The press circulates books very cheap; philosophers from opinion, and wits for bread, publish Atheism; and the half-learned and vitious read. With these the authority of the learned, as well as the objections against doctrines which men's vices may induce them to wish not to be true, go far; and those of inferior learning or rank are glad to follow the opinions, as well as the vices of their betters: so that a man that truly fears God, is at this day almost as great a curiosity as an Atheist was heretofore.

What makes the truth of those reflections the more sensible, is, that though those philosophers called Freethinkers controvert the duties owing to the Deity, and dream of no punishment attendant on the neglect; yet they all pretend to be, and generally are sensible of the social duties, and act up to them better than others do who in other respects think more justly than they. And this comes from the moral sense in them; which they rather encourage than stifle on that article, from the vanity of having the good opinion and approbation of mankind, which

they court; and from this consideration, that it is no obstruction to their pursuits. Whereas, brought up with doubts of the very existence of the Deity; ripening into years, under a total neglect of all duties that may be owing to him; immersed in pursuits and courses whereof the objects are pretty much incompatible with those duties; and conscious, that such duties neglected, if there is any real obligation to them, must be highly offensive to the Deity, and attended with certain punishment; it is natural for them to wish they may have made no mistake in that article, and that they may not be found debtors to the divine justice. And it imports them very much, in respect to the future quiet and tranquillity of their lives, if they resolve to pursue the pleasures wherein they are engaged, to convince themselves, if they can, that all apprehensions of danger from neglect of duties to the Deity are but vain terrors, the device of priests, or the dreams of melancholy men.

But if there be such a thing as an intelligent Being, that has employed and displayed infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, in the creation of this universe; that has with stupendous artifice stored this globe with every thing necessary, not only for the support, but for the felicity of man; that on all his works has stamped characters of the infinite perfections and overflowing goodness of the Author; that has given to man, and to him alone of all the visible creation, that share of his goodness, eyes to be entertained with the magnificence, the beauty, the harmony, and the order of the universe; to see the perfection of the Creator in his works; and to discover the infinite obligations he lies under to, and the dependence he has on the goodness of his beneficent Maker; that has so moulded his heart and spirit, as to make pleasure attendant on admiration, and love and gratitude the necessary companions of the sense of favours re-

ceived; and that has joined to the idea of ingratitude, the sensation of horror; and to consciousness of gratitude, an inward satisfaction, that even adds to the relish of the favour received: what could have been the view of the Creator in bestowing those eyes, and that disposition of heart and spirit? Was he or was he not to be discovered, admired, adored, loved, and revered; or was it indifferent to that perfect and beneficent Being, which way his creature employed his eyes, or disposed of his heart? And, on the other hand, how gross must be the folly and guilt of man, who, misemploying his eyes, and misapplying his heart, has refused to see the perfection of God in his works; and, in place of acknowledging with gratitude his obligation and dependence, chuses to be indebted to nothing but what he calls *nature* and *chance* substituted by him in the room of God; and bestows his heart upon vanity, upon the creature in place of the Creator?

If neglects and breaches of the social and moral duties are criminal even in the eyes of Freethinkers, what must be the guilt of neglecting the only duty, properly speaking, to God, of denying him the only return which he expects, because it is the only return he has qualified us to make, reverence, love, and gratitude? Ingratitude to men is marked with the blackest stain; what must then that vice be when it has for its object the source of all goodness? and what chance is there that it shall pass unpunished? It is astonishing, that men who justly look with such horror and detestation on murder and parricide, should think so coolly on the abnegation of the Deity; which denying him his tribute of reverence and gratitude is. But the instances of punishment which the magistrate, for the preservation of the society, inflicts, helps to keep up the idea of horror that attends the first; and the forbearance of vengeance in

the latter, is by weak pretenders to reason made an argument to conclude, that no offence is given.

It is a strange imagination, to admit, that men are formed with ideas of right and wrong, with a sense of duty and the contrary, and with full physical liberty to act as they shall best like; and yet to maintain, that it is absolutely indifferent to the Deity, who gave them that rule of conduct, whether they conform to or transgress it, whether they do right or wrong; and, consequently, that it is indifferent to them, if they escape punishment from their fellow-creatures, whether they have or have not conformed themselves to the rule of their Creator and Sovereign Lord.

The excellency of the body, the capacity of the understanding, the extent of the knowledge of the most perfect of the human species, cannot possibly make any impression on the Deity, other than the general complacency that results from the survey of his works, and seeing that they are good. What a poor figure must the parts, the sagacity, and the knowledge of the admired Sir Isaac Newton make in the eye of the Omniscient? And how few Newtons can mankind boast of? These are therefore not the qualities that claim the Deity's regard. But if a rational creature, however limited in understanding, or imperfect in body, shall have his heart and spirit right disposed; shall see, and, in all his thoughts and actions, acknowledge his dependence on the God that made him; shall maintain in his heart a grateful sense of the numberless obligations he lies under to that bountiful Being, and shall be thoroughly disposed to make the *will* of that Being the rule of his actions during the whole course of his life; regardless of the pleasures and sensual enjoyment which following this rule may deprive him of, and of the dangers and inconveniences to which pursuing it may expose him;

in full confidence, that the sincerity of his heart will be acceptable to, and rewarded by the Creator, who endued it with such dispositions: we must necessarily conclude, either that the Omniscient does not know the dispositions and inward actings of the spirits of all his creatures, or that the grateful and dutiful heart of such a creature is pleasing and agreeable to him.

Thus the objects of the complacence of the Almighty amongst the children of men, may be as numerous as the individuals of the species. He has given to very few, those distinguishing parts that provoke the esteem even of their fellow-creatures; but he has given to all, hearts susceptible of reverence, gratitude, and love; and they have no more to do, but to employ those dispositions towards the proper object, to intitle themselves to the continuation of his goodness and good-will for them. It is remarkable, that the only thing which God claims of man in scripture is the *heart*; and it is remarkable also, that possession of the heart of any of our own, or even of the brute species, is what secures our affection in return. Persuasion of the friendship or love of any of our fellow-creatures, determines us to sentiments of the like kind for them; and we cannot help, when a dog, a cat, or any other familiar creature shews marks of any particular respect or fondness for us, to have pleasure in that fondness, and to cherish the creature in return. Now, though to limit the sovereign and self-existent Mind, by supposing that it has just such qualities and modifications as ours, would be rash; yet it would be rash also to assert, that there are not in it qualities and dispositions similar to such as are praise-worthy and commendable in our own. Nay, the contrary must be admitted by all who believe the scriptures; which assure, that God made man after his own image, and

in every page declare his dislike of sin, and regard for piety.

But here lies the misfortune: This claim of the Creator to the hearts of his creatures cannot be complied with; because they have already disposed of their hearts in another way. Lusts and follies of very different kinds have got possession of their spirits, and the gratification of those is the object of their pursuit. Multitudes follow the direction of the temperature of their body, and are slaves to the appetites that prevail in them; which chain them to the oar they tug at, by the immediate pleasure they taste in obeying the call of those appetites; whilst the very enjoyment of what they are so fond of, destroys the appetite, pulls on diseases and peevishness, with early old age and decay; which must be attended with remorse and horror, if they do not carefully lock out from their thoughts all ideas of futurity, and of what ought to have been the object of their pursuits. To talk to such men of duty, whether in the career of their enjoyments, or when they are no longer capable of enjoying what their soul took delight in, is to preach to the deaf, at least to such as will undoubtedly stop their ears against sounds that must be so grating and disagreeable.

And, on the other hand, great numbers, who, from their constitution, education, or other circumstances, have escaped the enchantments of sensual pleasures, and have relished the delight that attends the exercise of their mental faculties, by much the most substantial, manly, and lasting enjoyment of the two, see, with regret and contempt, the brutish folly in which their fellow-creatures are engaged. They pity and despise those grovelling mean souls, who never once tasted the refined satisfaction that results from employing the rational powers in the acquisition of knowledge, and the discovery of truth. And by

how much soever the soul exceeds in excellency the body, by so much they look upon themselves to be better and happier than their brethren. In this they glory, in this they are really happy. In their own opinion they are wise, and they hope they are so in the opinion of all others. On the vanity that results from such an empty conceit they feed. They are glad to be thought wiser and better than they truly are. To gain the estimation of their acquaintance, they are charlatans in science, and hypocrites in conduct. The natural desire of approbation, born with them, they have transferred from God to their fellow-creatures. The applause of men, deserved or undeserved, blows up their pride. On that, and on their imagined knowledge, they value themselves; and can have no idea of any state for which they would exchange their own, except one in which they might be more knowing or more esteemed.

In the whole course of the lives of such men, the true direction of the *heart* was never once minded. Sensual enjoyment it might not have for its object, but it had the Creator less; and knowledge, with the reputation of knowledge, it ardently breathed after and exulted in. To bring such men to a fixed belief, that the boasted acquisition of their lives was no more than vanity, and vexation of spirit; that death must deliver them over to judgment, for the abuse of those noble talents which their Maker had bestowed on them; and that there is no way to escape punishment, but by banishing those vanities from their heart, and yielding it entirely to the God that framed it, would be no easy spot of work; every power of their mind would be employed in defence of the idol they had carved for themselves. If religion had prescribed only prayers, penances, building of churches, or any other transient act, its language might have been listened to: but, as it will be satisfied with nothing

less than the *heart*, which is already bestowed, no wonder philosophers are deaf.

To resist the evidence that pours in upon them, from nature, from revelation, from all quarters, in behalf of religion; and to stifle the apprehensions which it must naturally beget, they call in to their assistance that boasted reason, which qualifies them to judge of God, and of all his works and ways. Him and them they try by that infallible touchstone; and if ought is proposed to be believed of either, which they cannot distinctly comprehend the manner or cause of, the proposition is immediately rejected, as absurd and impossible; or if any difficulty or objection occur to their imagination which cannot instantly be dissolved, the validity of the objection is straightway allowed, and the proposition to which it relates, is condemned. But this is not all. If the proposition condemned has revelation for its support, the whole of revelation, together with the evidence for it, are damned by the lump; because that cannot be the declaration of God, but must be a palpable forgery, which asserts any falsehood, or, what is just the same, any thing that does not fall in with the notions of the learned and the wise.

Thus, because Freethinkers cannot conceive how a spirit can exist without a body, or how a body dissolved into dust, and dissipated, can be resuscitated, they doubt of a future state, and deny the resurrection; though these very wise men must admit, they have no adequate conception of the soul, or of its *manner* of existence or acting, or of the way in which it and the body were brought together.

In like manner, what is called the *hypostatical union* in Christ, is rejected, because the *manner* of it cannot be comprehended by men; who must admit the union between soul and body in man, and must at the same time confess, they neither do, nor can, whilst they

remain in their present condition, conceive how the one operates on the other.

The doctrine of the Trinity shares the same fate; and with some more shew of reason; as, besides the difficulty of comprehending the *how* and the *wherefore*, in that doctrine, as commonly expressed, there is some appearance of contradiction in the terms, which makes it difficult to conceive what is meant to be believed. But this appearance of contradiction is owing, not to the revelation from which the knowledge of that history is derived, but to the vanity and folly of the doctors of the church; who, puffed up, even as the Freethinkers, with too good an opinion of their own parts, would take upon them to define what revelation does not; and to coin terms not made use of in scripture, to express their imperfect conceptions. The words *Trinity*, and *Person*, or *Hypostasis*, are terms not to be met with in the sacred book: and yet to those terms, and the application of them, the revolt against the doctrine is chiefly owing.

What the scripture acquaints us with, is this, and no more: That what it characterises the FATHER, the avenger of wrong, and rewarder of right, is GOD; that what it characterises the SON, the WORD, the Creator of the world, the Redeemer of mankind, sent for that purpose by the Father, is GOD; that the HOLY SPIRIT, the correspondent with, and Comforter of the spirits of men, is GOD; and that nevertheless the DEITY, the SELF-EXISTENT BEING, is but ONE. That these matters are so, the scripture expressly declares; and the manner in which it expresses the last proposition, Deut. vi. 4. is worth attending to. Our translators render it, *Hear, O Israel, the LORD our GOD is one LORD.* The original says, *JEHOVAH our Gods is one SELF-EXISTENT BEING*; for so the word translated *Lord* signifies. Now, what is there in our

knowledge, in our conceptions, or in our reason, that can qualify us to determine the *modus* of the existence, or of the action of the invisible Deity? That we have no sort of idea of the substance of that soul which acts in us, or of the manner of its existence or actions, is an agreed point; what impudence then must it be in us, to pretend to determine, from our conceptions, or rather inability to conceive, the condition, or manner of existence and acting of the Supreme Being, the least of whose works are in very deed beyond our comprehension?

The antients, less refined than we, disputed about the figure and form of the Deity; and, knowing none more perfect or noble, as they apprehended, than that of man, bestowed upon the Deity a human shape and figure. The impropriety of this gross imagination we see; as we perceive, that the ideas of extension, shape, and figure, are not applicable to spirit, according to the idea which we have of it. But though we have not eyes to discover the substance or properties of spirit, does it certainly follow, that they have nothing in them analogous to shape or figure; no properties by which they can be discerned, and distinguished the one from the other, by God, or even by other spiritual beings, to whom he may have given eyes and understanding fit to perceive what we cannot? And is it not, on the other hand, clear, that there may be somewhat analogous to figure, some particular *modus* of existence of the Deity, of which our want of ideas will not permit us to form any notion!

Had nature produced to our view such living creatures as wild fiction can present to our fancy, composed of three or more distinct bodies, absolutely separated from each other, without any bodily connection, but actuated by one and the same principle, moving by one will, acting with one consent, each

affected by the accidents that touch either, the one wounded by the blow that wounds the other, and all dying by the killing of one; we should have had no distinct conception of what the scripture represents concerning the Deity. But then, habituated to the sight of such an extraordinary creation as has been mentioned, the scripture-doctrine would cease to be so shocking as it is to our wise men: and yet, from their knowledge of the machinery of nature, they will hardly take upon them to say, that the Deity could not have created such an animal as has been feigned.

If this reflection wants any further illustration, let the vision of Ezekiel, chap. i. & x. be considered: Four living creatures, which he knew to be the *Cherubim*, actuated by one spirit, moving with one consent whithersoever they would; attended by as many wheels, moving spontaneously in the same manner, because the *spirit* of the *living creature* was in them. This plurality and unity exposed in vision to the Prophet's view, must have lessened his difficulty against admitting the doctrine which so much offends our Freethinkers, because nothing resembling it has ever offered itself to their imagination. It is not necessary at present to inquire, how far the *Cherubim* was the emblem pitched upon by the Deity to represent the divine nature, with man united to what the lion in that hieroglyphical figure denoted. It is sufficient to observe, that if such living creatures had existed in nature, and had been seen and known, as the Prophet saw living and acting in vision, the mystery exploded by philosophers would not have been quite so incompatible with common notions as they pretend. And therefore it is absurd for wise men, to declare against a matter of fact asserted by the highest authority, for no other reason, forsooth, but that their observation or experience has presented

them with nothing that should furnish an adequate idea of it.

Upon the same sort of principles, our modern reasoners reject the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction. They cannot conceive how the punishment of one who is innocent, should atone for the guilt of another. This to them appears to be contrary to the essential justice of the Deity, which ought not to take pleasure in the sufferings of the innocent; and productive of no good effect, suited to the character which they entertain of that exalted Being.

Here again the temerity of those presumptuous men is notorious. That justice, according to our notions, will not condemn one for the fault of another, is manifest. But if the innocent should consent to suffer for the guilty, where is the violation of justice in permitting it? If the innocent again has some great and noble end in view by submitting to that suffering, fit to recompense a thousand-fold the grief borne, where is the injustice of permitting him to put himself in the place of the guilty? If the innocent person is all mercy, all bowels, all compassion, and can sustain the punishment which the broken-hearted repenting criminal cannot; what is shocking in the belief, even according to our common notions, that, to comply with the benignity of his nature, he might submit to bear it? It is true we may not see so clearly why the divine justice should be satisfied for the offence of one by the sufferings of another; and that the light of nature would not have led us to discover, that we guilty offenders were to be delivered from punishment by the sufferings of another: but is that a reason why we should not take God's word for it, if he has been pleased to assure us that it is so? Do we know so intimately the nature of his essential justice, as to be certain that it will not permit him to accept of a vicarious satisfaction? Amongst men, we know,

that debt owing by one may be discharged by payment made by another; and are we certain, that, in the court of heaven, one man's obligation to justice may not be cancelled upon another's voluntary fulfilling of it? He little thinks on the unmeasurable difference that is between the narrowness of the human understanding, and the immensity of the divine, who dares rest on such conclusions.

Another instance of men's making their own confined observations and conceptions the measure and touchstone of truth, is, the prevailing opinion that discards providence, denies a future state, and consequently renounces the Deity, at least deprives the first cause of all intelligence.

This notable opinion is grafted on observation, that the Deity does not interpose in any extraordinary manner in the transactions of this lower world; that every thing proceeds in it according to the concurrence of natural causes; that the same events befall the wicked as the virtuous, with the advantage most commonly on the side of the vicious; that the strongest battalions, conducted by the best officers succeed in battle; and that vice and villany is triumphant, when conducted by skill, without any appearance on the part of God in providence to prevent the effects of the wickedness, or to correct the authors of it: and from these observations the collection is, that all actions are indifferent, and that a future state is a bugbear.

Now, supposing these observations precisely true, and that there is not the least interposition of the Deity in this world, what is the necessary consequence? Whether that all actions are indifferent, in flat contradiction to the clearest feeling and perception of the soul; or that there must be a future state, in which the actors must severally be distinguished by rewards and punishments? If there are such things as right

and wrong, if the Deity is intelligent, and if justice is an attribute of that Being, the last must necessarily be the true conclusion. But as the admitting it might be attended with some uneasy apprehensions, and might require a change of heart and conduct, the moral sense, the most intimate conviction, must be smothered, and intelligence and justice denied to the infinitely perfect Being.

But, after all, on what is this important proposition, That the Almighty has absolutely abandoned all sublunary things to the direction of chance, founded? Why just on this, That none of our wise men have seen any miracles wrought of late times; and they are not disposed to think it possible, that any could have been wrought in the more early; and it is a truth not to be contested, that the unjust succeed in this world, fully as well as the just.

But if they were to be asked, Whether they are certain, that no cause has interposed in the producing any event but what they have observed? and whether they are sure that there are no secret springs in providence, unseen and unthought of by them, to which important events are owing? If they would not be laughed at, they must answer in the negative; which is enough to destroy the certainty of their position.

But to examine the thing more carefully, they must distinguish between individuals of the human species, and states and kingdoms; which by us are considered in some sort as individuals, and may be so by the Ruler of the universe. Though men be not punished or rewarded here, they may meet with that they deserve hereafter. But if states and kingdoms are not to meet with any correction in this world, they cannot be considered as proper objects of it in another.

Now, it is a certain truth, that all states and kingdoms, in proportion as they grow great, wealthy, and powerful, grow wanton, wicked, and oppressive.

And the history of all ages gives evidence of the fatal catastrophe of all such states and kingdoms, when the cup of their iniquity was full: nor is it possible to shew, that any one state or kingdom has been overturned that did not deserve it at the hand of Providence; however little they may have deserved it at the hand of the tyrant or oppressor who brought their calamity upon them. In this argument it is not necessary to say, that no unjust war ever prospered. Providence may make use of the vitious and wicked disposition of any prince, or of the ruler of any state, to execute justice upon a power fated to punishment. And the only question which the adversaries to Providence have to answer, is, How they can be sure, that those deserved judgments were the effect of mere fortuity, without the least intervention on the part of the Lord of the universe?

The course of providence with respect to individuals of the human species undergoes a very different consideration, and ought to be viewed in a light which no Freethinker ever thought of. If by happiness and prosperity in this world is meant, wealth, and power, and enjoyment of all pleasures, and success in all pursuits; it may be safely allowed, that the best man is not the happiest or the most prosperous: but if by happiness and prosperity is meant, the full and quiet enjoyment of all the pleasures that man, considered as a rational being, is capable of; and success in all the pursuits in which, as a reasonable creature, he ought to engage; there is no doubt, that the good man will be found to be the most completely happy; and with that good man as little doubt, that the Maker and Sovereign Lord of man has not abandoned the care of him to blind chance.

The man who, forgetting all regards for the Author of his being and happiness, centers all his views upon himself; who, born with a vigorous body and

keen appetites, succeeds to, or acquires means to gratify all his brutal desires, and plunges into the enjoyment of whatever his lust directs him to, is not, in the eyes even of the most freethinking philosopher, happy. His pursuits, as well as his enjoyments, are mean and beastly; surfeits and accidental diseases interrupt the course of his felicity; age, with its attendant infirmities, dissolve the charm that bound him; pleasures of all sorts lose their relish; and the terrors which death unavoidable must bring, are no way to be evited, but by banishing all thoughts of death from the mind. Such a man's possessions and enjoyments cannot denote him happy; nor would a wise man pray for these blessings as the portion with which he was to be contented, unless he might obtain this other boon, that he should never decay nor die.

No philosopher that breathes the air, is so silly as to maintain, that the objects of the pursuits of the avaritious, or of the ambitious, whether in the political or martial way, are objects fit for the pursuit of a rational creature; or that success in those pursuits is fit to denote such a creature happy. And if they will take an impartial view of their own boasted felicity; if they will draw up a fair account of the sum of their learning and knowledge, and of the happiness they have tasted in the acquisition and enjoyment of those blessings; and if they will candidly set against it the discoveries they must have made of the scantiness of their knowledge, the weakness of their understanding, and their necessary dependence on somewhat not within themselves for their existence, which they never have thought fit to acknowledge; or, however, adding to those reflections, the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of what may come after: the balance of the account will doubtless stand on the wrong side; and will shew, that though they have been more happy, or rather less miserable than the

profligate of the higher or lower class of mankind, yet neither their pursuits nor acquisitions can give them any title to consider themselves, or to be considered by others, as really happy.

Now, on the other hand, let the case of that man be considered, who, delivered from the slavery of those vices and follies, and acquainted with the end for which he was created, endeavours with all his powers to answer the design. Such a one tastes the same pleasure in all sensual enjoyments as the greatest epicure; and has as quick a relish of all mental joys that proceed from the pursuit, or from the discovery of truth, as the greatest philosopher.

But then he sees, with the philosopher, that those sensual enjoyments are mean and beastly, unworthy of the pursuit of rational creatures; that they are annexed to the performance of the animal functions, to induce men to do acts necessary for their own preservation, and the propagation of the species; but which they never would think of, but for the appetites implanted in them, and the pleasure which attends the gratification of the appetites; and that satiety and uneasiness accompanies the pursuit of those pleasures any farther than nature requires.

And he sees, by the exercise of his rational powers, what few philosophers attend to, that the eyes of his mind were given him to discover the immensity, the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Creator in his works; to discover the overflowing bounty of that perfect Being to him, and his constant dependence on the Author and Source of his happiness; to discover the numberless obligations he lies under, with reverence and gratitude, to obey and to adore the Sovereign of the universe; to discover his duty towards his fellow-creatures, as well as towards his Creator; to discover, that the favour of the Almighty must attend performance of duty, as his displeasure

must follow the ungrateful breach of it; to discover, that the favour of God is the only object worthy of the pursuit of the heart of man; and to discover; that the bestowing that heart, and all the desires of it, on sensual brutish pleasures, or any other vanity, to the exclusion of the *Eternal*, is the most horrid, as well as the most foolish crime that can be imagined.

The pleasures of life are enjoyed by this man with as much, perhaps with more relish, than by the libertine. But then they do not pervert the heart. The only motion they are capable of exciting there, is, gratitude and thankfulness to the beneficent Donor. The acquisition of knowledge is tasted by him with as much delight as it is by the philosopher; though it produces in them very different effects. The one it puffs up with pride and presumption; the other it fills with humility, and reverence for the Most High.

The man who has fixed his heart upon the proper object, does not cease to taste with pleasure the common blessings of this life; neither does he fail to bestow the proper industry to acquire, and to preserve them. But then he considers them only as so many sugar-plums given by the Creator to make his confinement to his prison of clay more palatable; which must have an end when his enlargement begins. He laments the unhappy condition of those who seek after them as their chief good. He would neither acquire nor preserve them at the expence of doing one single act that might forfeit the favour of his Maker and Benefactor: neither does he repine at the privation of them; knowing, that it could not happen without the will and pleasure of his Lord and Master, the Sovereign of the universe, to which his heart and will cheerfully submit.

Compare the happiness of this man with that of the greatest favourite of fortune, who has set his heart on other objects, and who has had the full gratifica-

tion of all his appetites, so far as the course of humanity will permit; but who must die, and leave those enjoyments, uncertain what is to happen hereafter. This man enjoys, in common with the wife and the voluptuous of his rank in the world, all the sensual and mental pleasures in which they delight, without the alloy that must torture their minds, when they think of parting with them. But then he has in himself a constant source of unalloyed joy, to which they are utter strangers. The abundant goodness of the Giver of all those blessings, fills his soul with gratitude and thankfulness, and disposes him with joy to do what appears to him to be his duty; and consciousness of that happy disposition produces the most firm confidence and reliance on the favour and good-will of his omnipotent Benefactor; from which he is to look hereafter for joys of a different nature from those which in this life he slights, when they stand in the way of his duty. Every act of duty performed, fills his soul with a placid, still satisfaction, that is sensibly felt, though not easily expressed. A mouthful of meat bestowed on a hungry beggar, gives the heart of the donor more real satisfaction, than the relish of the food gives pleasure to the craving stomach, or the most delicious dainty gives to the vitiated palates of the voluptuous. And the particular excellency of these enjoyments is, that no excess can surfeit or pall the appetite, no accident can deprive him of them.

To a man possessed of such an incorruptible stock of happiness, the pleasures of this life appear but mere baubles; and the privation of them a trifling loss. Life itself he is disposed to resign with willingness, because to him death has no sting.

If then felicity, even in this life, does not depend upon what are called the gifts of fortune, but on the disposition of soul that has been described, with what countenance can any Freethinker maintain, that in

this world there is no interposition of the act of the Deity, no special providence? It may indeed be true, that wealth, and honours, and power do not attend the most deserving; and that halters, and infamy, and want do not lay hold on the vitious: but will it follow, from our not being able to see the hand of Providence in the distribution of those perishing favours on which the real happiness of man does not depend, that the Framers of the hearts of men has no communication with them, and never interposes to determine them to that wherein their chief felicity consists?

The proofs of the goodness and justice of God, of the duty and dependence of man, of the certainty of rewards and punishments, of the desperate condition of those who, neglecting God and their duty, pursue fading pleasures and vanity with their whole spirit; and of the real and permanent happiness of such as enjoy all the gifts of God with thankfulness, and gratefully make it the business of their lives to obey his will and to obtain his favour, are so conspicuous, that nothing seems to be wanted towards their producing *conviction*, but somewhat that shall turn their eye, and fix the attention upon them; because, if they are duly considered and attended to, the evidence is irresistible. Now, as that attention may be raised by various incidents, sometimes by sickness and distresses of different kinds, sometimes by a happy education, sometimes by the conversation of pious persons, and sometimes by reading and meditation, which a thousand circumstances seemingly accidental concur to improve; why should we conclude, that all these incidents are purely accidental; and that the person transformed, by them, from a miserable brute to a happy man, owes the change to blind chance? Whatever vain reasoners may imagine or bable, the person whose eyes are opened by those incidents, ac-

knowledges with gratitude the hand of God in them.

But though Freethinkers might be excused for concluding, however rashly, that Providence does not interpose in the government of the external transactions of this world, because, after all the observations they can make, they have not complete evidence to the contrary; yet what excuse can they have for pretending to judge, that the merciful and beneficent Spirit of God does not work upon the spirits of men? From their proper experience they can draw no observation, as they have locked out all regards for the Deity from their heart; and what passes in the spirits of other men they can have no knowledge of, nor indeed any idea, as they have suffered no such transactions to take place in their own.

Philosophers have talked much of action and reaction in matter, and imagine they understand what they say; what should hinder them to believe, that there may be such a thing as action and reaction between spirits, even between the infinitely perfect Spirit and the spirits of finite men? If gratitude observed in a dog produces some regard and kindness in the mind of his master, why may not the gratitude, the warmth of the heart of man, work some similar effect in the all-seeing Mind? and who dare presume to say, that it may not act on, and comfort the spirit of man in return? If that beneficent and all-powerful Spirit does not shew his kindness in bestowing wealth, and power, and fading pleasures; it is because they are not real goods; because they are not the object of the heart and wishes of the party favoured; and because, in place of doing them real good, they might call off the affections from that exercise wherein his true felicity consists. And this is so true, that crosses, disappointments, and distresses, may justly be considered as acts of the greatest kindness, when they

tend to recal the straying mind from vanity, and to fix it on its proper object.

How then dares presumptuous short-sighted man deny the interposition of Providence, because he does not see the secret spring by which it acts, or know the intentions of the Inscrutable? Or how can he, because a satisfactory reason does not appear to him for the long-suffering patience and forbearance of the Most Merciful, doubt of the existence or justice of that Being; deny a future state; or maintain the indifference of all actions, as to right and wrong? But such is the fatal effect of the corruption of man's heart, and of the deflection of it from the true object to vice and vanity.

The extreme folly of modern Freethinkers is much less accountable or excusable than that of the antients. The antients had no certain lights but those of nature. Those naturally led them to see the vanity of the pursuits wherein they were engaged, the depravity of the human nature, and the consequences which might attend their courses hereafter. Those were but melancholy reflections, leading to despair, and tending to sour every enjoyment; as they had no certain intimation, that any method was chalked out by the Deity for the expiation of sin, and for restoring offending man to his favour and protection. And therefore it is not to be wondered at, that they banished from their thoughts such gloomy uncomfortable speculations. But our modern madmen hear every day of mercy and pardon offered by the offended Deity to offending sinners, if they will receive it thankfully. They are told, that this is the declared will of God, and that there is compleat evidence of its being such; and they see, that this is the belief of numbers of the most sagacious and inquisitive of their fellow-creatures. But all this will not do. Their

heart is given to other objects; and they hear, that these must be dismissed before they can share of the pardon proffered.

To keep however their countenance, and the character of Freethinkers, they must assign some reason for their revolting against revelation. And this they readily do. They say, falsely, that they have carefully examined all the evidence for revelation; and they say, honestly and truly, that all the evidence which they have considered, has not been sufficient to satisfy their objections, and to convince them, that what is called revelation is really such.

That they have carefully examined *all* the evidence, is absolutely false. No man ever did, or can do so, without receiving perfect conviction. It is a question, whether any professed Freethinker who has hitherto appeared, had learning or talents sufficient to examine the evidence. It is certain, that none who have wrote, have discovered that they had either.

Men may search for arguments *à priori* for the proof of any proposition that may result from the nature of things known to them. That treachery to our neighbour, and ingratitude to the God that made us, are highly offensive, and ought to be punished by perfect justice, may be demonstrated *à priori*. But if sovereign goodness and mercy, to deliver repenting men from deserved punishment, has contrived a method of salvation by sending his Son to the world to suffer for them; and if, to prevent their despair, and to encourage their repentance and amendment, that beneficent Being has been pleased to publish his pardon, with the conditions of it, to mankind; this must be admitted to be a matter of fact not discoverable by any inductions *à priori*; because it is in some sort adversary to our general notions of right and wrong; and therefore, to have any effect on the minds of men, must have been published with such a degree

of evidence, as must necessarily gain full belief; and if it was the intention of the Author of this publication, that it should gain belief in future ages, the evidence must be of that nature that is fit to carry conviction to all for whom the publication was intended.

Accordingly this revelation, which was made soon after the first transgression, was renewed from time to time, under circumstances so distinguished, as could not possibly leave any doubt, that it was the declaration of the Deity. And, by wisdom and power more than human, such a sort of evidence has been contrived and preserved for the authority of that revelation, as far exceeds, in point of certainty, the proof of any other event that ever happened. That such cities as Babylon and Carthage existed; that Cæsar won the battle of Pharsalia, and was murdered in the Roman senate, no one doubts. But if all the documents for the authority of revelation were brought together, the proof in this last case is by so much stronger than that in the others, as the belief of it is more interesting to mankind.

But the different degrees of credit given to the one and to the other, arise from the different dispositions of the hearts of men. There is no prejudice in the mind of man against admitting the first; against the last there is this violent bias, that if it is admitted, men must become in their own eyes miserable wretches, and must dismiss those lusts and vanities on which they doated. To prevent this disgrace and irreparable damage, arms must be taken up against the evidence that insults their quiet; any objection, (of which there are, and must be multitudes), if it cannot easily be answered, is a demonstration superior to all the evidence for revelation; and they look into revelation, and to the evidence for it, only to arm themselves with such objections.

It is indeed no wonder, that men whose prejudices stand so much in the way of believing, do not give themselves the trouble to search after, and to collect *all* the proofs for revelation. It is a laborious work. All the remains of antient history, and the compositions of the learned of those times, must be examined; all the rites, opinions, and practices of nations, so far as they can be discovered, must be considered; all the monuments of antiquity now extant, must be surveyed; a reasonable knowledge of the languages in which revelation is recorded, must be attained; and the consequences that have attended that revelation since the advent of Christ, must be adverted to, before one can say that he is possessed of all the evidence, and before he can form a judgment of many of the objections which Freethinkers move. But that none of them who have wrote, have given themselves this trouble, is plain from their writings; which contain little more than smatterings of learning, to which the Jews have helped them, and which they seem, without due examination, to have taken on trust.

Though it has pleased the merciful wisdom of God, to scatter proofs of his revelation over all the antient nations, and to preserve documents of them down to our days, for the conviction of obstinate infidels, and for the confirmation of the faith of the inquisitive who believe; yet, happily for the bulk of mankind, who have neither time nor talents for such inquiries, revelation is so calculated, as to require nothing of man that his conscious soul does not see to be his duty; and to promise him nothing that does not appear to his most inward sense to be the necessary consequence of doing it. By it he is acquainted with his forlorn condition; which he needs do no more to discover to be truth, than to turn his eyes inward upon himself. And a remedy is pointed out adequate

to the disease: which tends to magnify the mercy, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Creator; and to tie the creature to him, by still stronger bonds of duty and gratitude.

In this system there is such harmony between duty and interest, and therefore such a propensity in every sober-thinking person to wish it to be true, that, from the declared opinions of others, better qualified to judge of the evidence, and to determine, it gains belief; and that very belief, influencing the practice, brings real tranquillity and happiness in this life, springing from confidence of the favour of the Almighty; a sure earnest of future felicity. But by the debauched and the giddy, who have delivered themselves over soul and body to their lusts, and to their vanity, this aptitude, this harmony is not discovered. Their fears make them wish it may not be true. Objections are rife in every corner; and if any inquiry is made into the proofs, it is with an intent to object, and to find them insufficient.

And one of the main objections is, That there is place for any objection against the certainty of revelation. Why, say those reasoners, if it had been the intention of the Almighty, that what is called the revelation of his will should have been believed by all mankind to be such, he would have accompanied it with such evidence as should have been at first sight superior to all objections, and must have convinced and converted all infidels: but since he has not done so, but, on the contrary, room is left for many objections, the conclusion is just, that this pretended revelation is none of his. And it must be admitted, the inference would be pretty just, on supposal of the proposition, That it was the intention of the Deity to convince and convert all infidels, however wicked and reprobate. For it is not to be controverted, that it was in the power of the Almighty to have accom-

panied revelation with constant standing miracles, even as it was in his power to have created man with a smaller share of free-will, and, by perpetual interposition of his grace, to have prevented his actual defection from his duty. But upon what principle is it supposed, that God intended, or ought to have intended, to extend his grace alike to all; to the obstinate and flagitious, as well as to the sober and the humble sinner? The discretion of men makes a wide difference between those characters; and how can we be sure, that the judgment of God does not so also?

The mercy of God has provided an atonement sufficient to expiate the sins of all mankind, who will take hold of it. The wisdom of God has contrived evidence sufficient to convince all mankind, that such atonement is provided, if they will give themselves the trouble to examine it. But then it is so contrived, as to reach with conviction those only who are disposed to take hold of it; that is, the meek and the humble, who are conscious of their distress by nature, and desirous to be delivered from it. And them it reaches, because they think it worth their while to inquire after, and to examine it; whilst it does not convince, nor indeed can it possibly, the proud and the stubborn, who slight the atonement provided so much, and are so thoroughly averse to comply with the condition upon which it is to be obtained, that without troubling their heads with the evidence, they insolently reject the mercy of the Most High. Who then can find fault with the divine goodness on this article? The meek surely will not; and the proud, who have themselves only to blame, ought not.

So the sum of the wise objection is this, That the good and just God did not intend, that salvation should reach those desperately wicked sinners who refused to accept of it. But this objection weighs with those who have never turned their thoughts up-

pon the heinousness of their own guilt; and have formed to themselves notions of the benignity of the Deity, from the false notions of generosity which they have encouraged in themselves, laying entirely aside his justice and his purity.

From the same source springs another objection, of equal validity as to revelation, founded on the doctrine of the perpetuity of punishment. Here again the incomprehensible, the infinitely perfect Being, is measured by the span of the low, blind, groveling creature that makes the objection; who, because he cannot comprehend why this justice is suited to the divine nature, concludes at once, that the doctrine is impossible, and therefore false; and, in consequence, rejects the revelation which is said to assert it, without giving himself the trouble to examine the evidence that supports that revelation, or to inquire whether the matter that thus shocks him, is really revealed. A careful inquiry might possibly satisfy him, that the perpetuity of punishments is not absolutely affirmed; and that no more is necessarily to be inferred from revelation, than that the misery of the damned is to endure for ages. But such an inquiry would give him competent satisfaction, that the revelation he wantonly rejects, is in very deed the word of God; and would dispose him to believe whatever it clearly declares concerning the Deity and his ways, without considering how far that might or might not tally with his conceits.

And herein lies the monstrous, the surprising folly of the vain philosopher. Every new observation, every discovery, which his sagacity has been accidentally led to make in nature, and which blows up his pride, becomes to him a fresh proof of his own weakness and short-sightedness, and of the immensity of the Deity, of the perfection of his wisdom, and of the inscrutability of his ways to man in his present

condition: and yet, from his narrow notions, he will pretend to decide what God ought, or ought not: what he can, or cannot do.

In the pittance of the material world which falls within his ken, the observations of the infinite wisdom, contrivance, and power of the Creator, daily grow upon him; new and unaccountable properties in matter, acting by unerring rules, and tending to the perfection of the whole, hourly pour in upon him; the magnet, the microscope, the telescope, the prism, the air-pump, the crucible, electricity, &c. furnish him with compleat evidence, that he knows nothing of the real nature of *matter*, which he sees, tastes, and feels, whereof he is in part composed, and in which he is at present immersed; and give him undoubted reasons to conclude, that there may be, or rather that there are numberless other properties in matter, and rules of acting which it steadily pursues, of which he at present has no knowledge, and possibly, so long as he is confined to clay, never can.

By what means then is he to judge of the spiritual world, of which he neither has, nor can have any adequate idea? A spirit acting in himself he feels, and is conscious of its actings; but what it is composed of, or how it acts, is all hidden from him. That there may be as many different classes of *spirits*, as there are tribes of animals or plants, he dare not deny; though he can have no conception of the manner of their difference, or of the uses for which they may be in the creation. That the Creator is spiritual, he collects with certainty from the astonishing wisdom and artifice of so much of the universe as is disclosed to him; that he is good and bountiful in a sovereign degree, his works declare; and that he is possessed of all possible perfections, his self-existence demonstrates. But whence comes man to take upon him to determine, what perfection in any of his at-

tributes is; that the justice of God must go thus far, and no farther; that his mercy requires he should, or should not do this or that; or that his goodness ought, or ought not to operate on such an occasion? This, sure, is the most astonishing presumption! Supposing him to have an adequate idea of justice, mercy, and goodness, as those must be by the Deity exercised in supreme harmony, as well as perfection; how dare he presume to define, how far the exercise of either of them may go? Common sense, and that modesty which ought to attend consciousness of our dimness of sight, would direct us, when any thing in the ways or will of God appears that we cannot account for, to receive and acquiesce in it with humble submission, and to believe that it is right and just.

Wherefore, when we see the whole brute creation, animate as well as inanimate, pursuing constantly, and without erring, the intention of God in their formation; and when we observe, in that part of the rational creation which is known to us, the highest disorder and confusion, rebellion against God, injustice towards men, fraud and falshood triumphant, virtue and sincerity despised and oppressed, and guilt contracted that must necessarily terminate in punishment, all the consequence of the freedom of will in man; let us not conclude, as mad-men are apt to do, that all actions are indifferent to the Deity, or that no punishment is to attend guilt, upon a supposal, that it would have been unbecoming the benignity of God, who must have foreseen the consequence of free-will in man, to have brought into the world so many millions of rational creatures, who he foresaw must become the objects of wrath and punishment.

Nothing is more certain, than that free-will has been the cause of transgression in man; and that the Deity must have foreknown the effects it was to produce. But are we sure, that, in the scale of essential

justice, it was not right and just, to have created man in a state of happiness, with a fitness and capacity to preserve that state, and to acquire one higher, and with a power to chuse between good and evil; with a sanction, that if he preferred evil to good, he must bear the dismal consequences of that perverse choice? Do we perfectly know the nature of the sovereignty and right which the Creator has to dispose of the creatures which he has made? Or are we acquainted with all the motives that induced the Most High to create man so qualified? Is it certain, that no good effect, worthy the divine goodness, to other parts of the unbounded creation, could have flowed from the fate of man? Or is it clear, that we are intitled to judge of the fitness or unfitness of any part of God's ways or works, without considering the relation it has to, and the effect it has on the whole? Until these questions meet with satisfactory answers, nothing can be more silly than to conclude as Freethinkers do.

A sober man, on the contrary, who sees and laments the disorders of mankind, will not give up the moral sense of his soul as to the merit or demerit of human actions; nor will he give up the justice or goodness of God, because he cannot precisely assign the motive that induced the Deity to endue man with that proportion of free-will with which he is possessed. Full conviction of the infinite disproportion that is between his limited understanding, and that of the self-existent Being, leads him to conclude with certainty, that his not being able to comprehend any thing, is not evidence that the Most High cannot. He may entertain himself profitably at least pleasantly, in meditating on such subjects: but, though his invention should fail of solving the difficulty, he will not on that account deny principles, nor impeach the justice or goodness of his Maker.

That the end of God in creating man, endued with

free-will, and with that proportion of reason, and of appetites, wherewith he was possessed, was not to discover to himself what use man was to make of those talents, must be evident to all who admit the omniscience and prescience of the Deity. But it is not so evident, that one of the motives of the Creator for framing man so qualified, may not have been, to render his justice and his mercy conspicuous to mankind; and to shew those attributes, as well as the effects of free-will left to chuse between the dictates of Reason and the bent of appetites, to other classes of rational beings, to us at present unknown.

Had all the rational creation unerringly pursued the dictates of Reason, that is, had they unerringly done their duty, there would have been no occasion for displaying the justice or the mercy of God. His immensity, his eternity, his astonishing power, goodness, and wisdom, were legible in his works; and it seems unreasonable to doubt, that one of the ends of the creation was, to exhibit to rational creatures complete evidence of those glorious attributes and qualities. But unless some rational creature had offended, there could have been no example of justice, nor any object for mercy.

Before any trespass committed, every rational being that supposed revolting against sovereign goodness possible, must have concluded, that the guilty deserved to be, and would be pursued by the vengeance of the Omnipotent. But in what manner justice required that this vengeance should be exerted, it could have no comprehension of; far less could it have any conception, that essential justice ungratefully affronted, should suffer thoughts of mercy to interpose in behalf of the insolent offender, and should devise a method, consistent with justice, to deliver the criminal from punishment, and restore him to his pristine favour.

But the abuse of free-will has given occasion to the manifestation of those divine qualities, which otherwise might have remained unknown to men and angels, in a light so distinguished as must needs produce admiration, with praise and adoration and give a more noble and interesting idea of the perfection of the Deity.

We know but too well, that man has fallen; and the scripture acquaints us with the revolt of some of the angels. Their crime, we are told, met with instant condemnation and punishment, but man's with a very different usage. The convicted and ashamed offender had hopes of mercy immediately given him. Infinite wisdom found means to satisfy essential justice, and to make way for the display of mercy, that glorious and adorable attribute of the Most High.

The cause of this diversity we can but guess at. The weakness of man, and the temptations he was liable to, we know; but the condition and temptation of the transgressing angels, we are not acquainted with. If we may however conjecture, their knowledge, capacity, and power was far beyond that of man; and consequently their defection less excusable; and accordingly we find their condemnation was by so much the more prompt and severe. Whereas with respect to man, the execution of the sentence against him was suspended; mercy was offered; a method of reconciliation with the Deity was set on foot; repeated intimations were made by the clement Deity of this purpose of grace; repeated and renewed institutions were backed by divine authority, to recal men to their duty; the sovereign and essentially just Lord of the universe was pleased to proclaim himself merciful and gracious, long-suffering and patient; and, through a long succession of ages, that declaration has by experience been found to be strictly true.

His long-suffering, accompanied with continual invitations to accept of pardon, endures to this moment to the inexpressible joy of those that love and fear him; though it must at least turn to the utter confusion of those who heedlessly or willfully reject the proffered grace.

In the treatment of the fallen angels, for whom we know no shadow of excuse, nothing but strict justice appears. In the treatment of man, the severity of the justice of the Eternal is made conspicuous, chiefly by the atonement which his mercy has provided to expiate the guilt, and avoid the punishment of unhappy creatures. But that boundless pity and compassion, that essential mercy, and that unwearied patience, which has been, and still is exercised towards ungrateful man, could never have appeared to men and angels, if the abuse of free-will had not given occasion for the display of it.

It is idle to inquire, because it seems impossible to discover, what gave occasion to the revolt of the fallen angels. But it is probable, their sudden and severe punishment has prevented trespasses of the like nature. That exertion of the justice and power of the Eternal must have made a deep impression upon all spirits of the angelic order. And if the rectitude of the remaining choir is owing to the punishment of the rebellious crew, who will presume to find fault with God, for giving angels such a portion of free-will as to leave them fallible, or for resorting to rigid justice for the punishment of their offence?

Had man, upon his first offence, been treated as he deserved: had threatened death immediately followed his crime, there would have been an end of the species: but there would have been no instance of the mercy, the tender-heartedness, the long-suffering of the Sovereign Being; none to sing his praises, or to bless him, on account of that divine attribute.

As his perfect wisdom and exuberant grace has contrived it, millions of the human race who have tasted of his goodness in this respect, feast their souls on the contemplation of his amazing condescendence, and with their whole spirit adore and bless him.

And if it cannot be doubted, that the end of the formation of myriads of various plants, and other inanimate productions, is, to give to intelligent minds some sort of idea of the wisdom, the power, and the goodness of the Creator; why will conceited men quarrel with the divine œconomy regarding the human race? since without that part of it to which they object, there could have been no tolerable idea of the mercy or the long-suffering of the Deity, nor any heart to rejoice, or tongue to bless him, on that account.

But this reflection goes still farther. We have heard of other rational creatures, besides ourselves, under the appellation of *angels*; some of whom fell, as we have done; and we know not whether any, or what diversity there may be of kinds amongst them. This much however may be concluded, that we cannot with any certainty determine, that there may not be between the supreme Being and us a vast variety of rational beings distinct from the human species, and differing from it as to the extent of understanding, affections, and inclinations; and considering the immensity of the universe, the high probability is, that such beings there are.

Now, if it may be further supposed, that those rational beings have any cognisance of what happens amongst the children of men, why may we not also suppose, that their information on this grand article was one of the ends in view with the Creator, when man was framed with that capacity to err that brought on the fall?

That angels, who are believed to have been for-

med very pure and perfect, were possessed of free-will, is plain; because they made a bad use of it, and fell. And if there are various classes of angels, and different species of spiritual or rational beings between the highest order of angels and us, their actions must, at least, according to our conception of the actions of rational beings, may be determined by choice. And it is impossible for us to say, what diversity there may be in the understandings and capacities of those different ranks of creatures; what propensities or inducements to persevere in pursuing their duty, or what dispositions or temptations to err.

Now, who can tell how many myriads of those creatures may owe the state of felicity they now enjoy, to the correction of the lapsed angels, and to the scene of misery and folly which the conduct of the vain conceited part of mankind has, almost since the creation of this system, presented them with.

If a philosopher views with just contempt the scandalous springs from which the actions of the vicious proceed, what must be the sense of intelligent beings of a superior order? How foolish, as well as odious, must the notions of wicked men be in their eyes? And how noble and magnificent must their idea be of the mercy and long-suffering of the Eternal, who, for so great a series of ages, has been following such wretches with perpetual offers of forgiveness and felicity? If in such minds there are any appetites or impulsions similar to those that lead the vain and the wicked of the human race astray, how careful must they be to restrain such desires; and how thankful to their Maker, for the admonition that has put them on their guard? * * * * *



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MY LORD,

ATHEISM, Deism, and the whole train of opinions that attend what is commonly called *Freethinking*, flow from a settled disbelief and contempt of revelation.

This disbelief is, in a great measure, owing to the want of a fair and unprejudiced examination of the numerous and various proofs and evidences that support the truth and authority of the scriptures.

But it is chiefly grounded on a firm persuasion, That human understanding is a sufficient guide to man, and the test and measure of all matters of belief; so that we are at liberty, nay indeed bound, to reject whatever does not answer those notions, which, by what we call reasoning, we have fixed:

That modern discoveries, the fruit of genius and application only, have fixed and determined to a certainty the laws and causes of the principal operations and phaenomena of nature, which were wholly unknown to the antients, and mistaken by the authors of the books which are received as revelation:

That therefore these books, so far as they give ac-

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counts of nature, contrary to experience, and demonstration resulting from it, are false; and consequently can, in no other point, pass for infallible:

That the scriptures relate a great many marvellous, improbable, nay incredible transactions, which do not seem to be directed to any purpose, suited to sovereign wisdom and goodness; and contain a world of institutions, laws, observances and ceremonies, which, to Freethinkers appear absurd, frivolous, and ridiculous; unworthy the supposed author, and improper to attain the proposed end.

When any apparent mistake in natural philosophy is objected to the scriptures, the answer commonly given is, in my opinion, stronger than the objection, according to the views of the disputants on either side, That these things, being incidental only, are spoken *ad captum humanum*, and accommodated to the understandings of those to whom they were delivered; though, I confess, it would be a much more comfortable answer, if it could be said, and proved, that the things objected to are true.

When Freethinkers ground themselves upon any improbable, or, as they will call it, incredible or absurd relation, there is no answering them without bringing together, and laying before them, the whole evidence that serves for supporting revelation; which, when poised in the scale against all objections of this kind that ever have been made, in my opinion, may certainly outweigh them: but, the misfortune is, the objection glares, can be taken in by a very moderate capacity, and requires no learning, and but little attention, to comprehend it; whereas, without long study, great learning, close attention, and a dispassionate and unprejudiced examination, the evidence for revelation cannot be collected and weighed. Whoever therefore lets in the strength of the objection, and, for want of learning or attention, (not

to speak of natural prejudices,) either cannot, or will not give himself the trouble to collect and weigh the proofs on the other side, must necessarily give it against revelation, and fortify himself in his incredulity.

And to this it is owing that all those, who, in this indolent and luxurious age, pretend to politeness, and aim at knowledge, and the reputation of understanding and science, without any expence of learning or labour, and without any interruption to their pleasures or pursuits, take up with objections against revelation, without the painful examination of the evidence that supports it; look down with contempt on Believers, as a parcel of prejudiced enthusiasts; and inlist themselves with Freethinkers, as the honestest, wisest set of men living.

And when men, carried by pleasures, or sunk in indolence, settle once upon these notions, every institution, ordinance or ceremony appointed in scripture, for which Christians cannot, or do not assign an adequate use or end, becomes fresh matter of objection, and tends to rivet and confirm infidelity.

This facility of receiving and taking up with objections, and the criminal indolence and neglect of those who do not give themselves the trouble to examine, with due care, the merits of the answer, has been long complained of, and lamented, by all who wish well to mankind; but hitherto in vain: something more than argument must intervene, to cool them in the pursuit of pleasures, to rouse their attention to their real interest, and to determine them to search with care and industry, before they will let in so much as a suspicion that their objections are ill founded; or those objections must be overthrown by some other and shorter mean than the complicated evidence for the authority of revelation, else the objectors will never give themselves the trouble to discover their mistakes.

Some time ago, as my thoughts were employed in these disagreeable reflections, a set of books were sent me by my bookseller to look over. The titles were odd, and provoked my curiosity: *Moses's Principia, parts 1. and 2. An Essay toward a Natural History of the Bible; Moses's—sine principio; A new Account of the Confusion of Tongues, and the Names and Attributes of the Trinity of the Gentiles*, were inscribed at the head of these several tracts, all published successively in different years, from the year 1724. and these are followed by another work, that was published very lately, intitled, *A Treatise of Power, essential and mechanical.*

Running over these books cursorily, I readily perceived, the Author proposed to prove, That the *Hebrew* scriptures had never been, and are not now, truly translated, or perfectly understood by those who pretend to be learned: That, rightly translated and understood, they comprise a perfect system of natural philosophy, as well as a compleat body of theology and religion: That they no where assert any of those heterodoxies in philosophy, which modern observations shew to be such; but, on the contrary, teach and aver every thing that has been truly gathered from observations or experiments, recent or ancient; and propose and explain mechanical principles different from, nay in many things diametrically opposite to those now received; by which all the various operations in nature are performed and which tally with, and can be supported by every observation and experiment that hath been truly taken or made: That the seeming absurdities, with which the scriptures are charged, either are not in the original, and are therefore owing to the ignorance or perverse design of the translators; or are, when rightly understood, no blemishes but beauties, in the revelation: and That the many institutions, declarations and observances,

which appear frivolous to those who do not understand them, are the product of perfect wisdom and contrivance, necessary to explain and preserve the religion inculcated in the Old Testament, and fit to prepare for that which afterwards was delivered in the New.

But though I easily gathered this to be the Author's proposal and intention; yet, upon looking into particulars, I found the proofs depended so much on the true construction of the *Hebrew* language, to which I was very much a stranger; and on an exact knowledge of the experiments and observations that have been made on the works of nature, with which I am but very little acquainted; that his reasoning almost every where, appeared to me intricate and arbitrary: and I was not without some doubts, that the obscurity I complained of, proceeded partly from design, for reasons that I could not penetrate.

Finding, from my own want of knowledge, such difficulty in examining the proofs offered to support propositions of such universal import to mankind, and which I wished so earnestly to discover to be conclusive and true; I resorted to several learned men of my acquaintance, skilled in the ancient language, on which the Author grounds himself, and conversant in the observations and experiments on which the modern philosophy of nature is built; not doubting but they had considered, and framed a certain judgment of his works. But, to my great surprise, though all of them had heard of, and seen some part of those tracts, yet not one of them had given himself the trouble to examine them. They complained of the intricacy and abstruseness of the Author's way of writing, and concluded him so certainly to be half-learn'd, visionary, and in the wrong, because his notions were contradictory to what they by long study had adopted and made their own, that they laid aside

his books without any farther enquiry, as what did not deserve, or would not answer the trouble of an examination.

Though I could have relied on these Gentlemen's judgment, if they had considered the Author's opinions and arguments with any care; yet, finding that they had censured without examination, and not being able to meet with any person whatever, who had given himself the trouble of canvassing with due attention his arguments, on a matter of so general concern; I rubbed up the little *Hebrew* I had, and addressed myself to a more careful perusal of the books; not with any hopes of being able finally to judge of the certainty of his supposed discoveries, but with a design to collect the general drift and tendency of his reasoning; to the end I might lay it before those who are infinitely better able to judge than myself; and who, from seeing scattered hints brought together, might be invited to consider the matter more seriously; to condemn and refute any thing that is false, and to approve, support and propagate every thing that is true. For I cannot help thinking it some reproach to the curiosity, as well as religious zeal of the Clergy of this nation, that sentiments so new and surprising, in matters of religion, should have been stalking about for so many years, without meeting with any examination, approbation, or confutation.

To give your Lordship, then, (from whose great proficiency in the Eastern learning, the only foundation of scripture-knowledge; and your thorough knowledge of natural things, from whence all ideas of beings and things invisible are conveyed; your known readiness to forward any work in favour of religion, especially a work of this kind, to establish the true meaning of the scriptures, much wanted, I expect a solution of my doubts,) an account of

these things that have made the greatest impression on me, in the order in which I have been able to comprehend them:

The Author affirms, (what I think most of the learned world, at present, agree in,) That pointing in the *Hebrew* writings is a modern invention, some centuries later than the days of our Saviour, contrived after the language ceased to be commonly spoken by the Jews, to favour their own constructions; and therefore of no authority to determine the sense of any word, but for that reason to be avoided.

That as the understanding, so the proper and original sense of many of the *Hebrew* words used to express matters of importance in philosophy and theology, was, in some degree, altered or lost, when the children of Israel made defections from the true religion, before the Babylonish captivity: so in the dispersion that attended that captivity, the pure *Hebrew* was altogether beat out of common usage, and the knowledge of it remained only amongst the few that were learned, and attentive to the true religion and philosophy that was delivered by Moses, and the other inspired writers.

That the Greek translation, commonly called the *Septuagint*, being made long after the return from the Babylonish captivity, when the genuine sense of the *Hebrew* words was, in a great measure, lost, is extremely imperfect; partly as the Greek language is destitute of words to convey the full and proper meaning of the *Hebrew* expressions; partly as the translators might have been ignorant, and might have accommodated their interpretation to their own views, in philosophy and theology, which were corrupted; and partly as they durst not (had their understanding been better) translate, in some points truly, for fear of provoking the Egyptians, in whose country they composed their translation; and whose gods, had

they given a faithful translation, they must to the last degree vilify and affront.

That, nevertheless, this and other translations so fully discover the genius of the *Hebrew* language, and so certainly translate words, when employed about matters that the interpreters were under no bias to render falsely, that a key from thence may be made for construing, with certainty, the whole *Hebrew* scriptures.

The Author avers, that the *Hebrew* language (from which, it seems pretty certain, the Phœnician, the Chaldee, the Syriack, the Arabick, the Greek, the Latin, and divers other branches were derived) was the original one; framed in paradise, and with this particularity, that each root is taken from some particular beast, bird, plant, flower, or some other sensible object, and employed to represent some very obvious idea of action or condition raised by such sensible object; from whence it is further carried to signify spiritual or mental things, of which we can frame ideas only by the help of material or bodily things.

He denies that any one root in the whole language conveys ideas of a different meaning; and affirms that one, and but one, leading sense runs through all the formation of the same root; contrary to the established doctrine of the Jews, who, by variety of arbitrary pointings, ascribe different, and contradictory senses very often to a word composed of the very same letters; with design, as our Author suggests, to darken the sense of the scriptures, chiefly, if not altogether, in those points which contain the knowledge of the Christian system, and the religion of the Heathens.

After observing that there is not one line of authentic *Hebrew* left in the whole world, but what is comprised in the books of the Old Testament, our Author insists that there is one, and but one, certain

way of decyphering it; that is, by comparing every word in all the various combinations and sentences in which it appears, and gathering from thence the leading or original idea it was intended to raise; which is ever, from such comparifon, with certainty to be collected.

He fays, that though all the modern *Hebraicians* had the ufe of very accurate concordances, that might have helped them forward in this investigation, yet their progrefs was marred by the blind refpect they paid to the falfe or fraudulent pointings of their adverfaries the Jews; and that he, fhaking himfelf loofe from thofe fetters, has been able to settle the genuine meaning of every important word in the whole Old Testament.

And, from the fixed and perpetual meaning of the words fo explained, he fays he is able to fhew, that the fcriptures, however difguifed and diffigured by the tranflation, are written with the utmoft accuracy, propriety, and truth; that they contain a perfect fyftem of natural philofophy, and, upon that grafted, a compleat fyftem of theology, fo far as mankind is capable of receiving that fublime knowledge; and unerring rules for all religious fervice and belief.

Through the whole of his works he attempts to define and determine the true fenfe of a great many words ufed by Mofes and the prophets, in the defcription of the formation of the world, and the prefervation and fupport of all the operations that are carried on in it: he avers that the defcriptions, by them given in thefe words, contain a mechanical account of all the powers, and of the operations carried on in, and by this material fyftem; and he infifts that all the phænomena in nature can be accounted for by the principles laid down by them.

But to give you as clear a view, as I am able, of the further defign of our Author: He fupposes it will

not be denied to him, that man, a compound of soul and body, cannot frame to himself, or compare ideas but such as are taken from sensible objects: What powers or faculties the soul might have, if detached from the body, we cannot know; but as we are now made, we upon moderate reflection discover, that the soul of man, in this state, has not power to frame to itself, or to receive any idea that does not come from the senses, at least from some feeling or sensation communicated to it by, or through the body.

The sun, the light, the air, the earth, the body of man we can frame ideas of, as we can of the manner of their acting, and being acted upon; but the soul, which perceives and compares those ideas, we can frame no manner of idea of, nor of its manner of acting, or being acted upon.

And we, who know that we have no capacity to conceive any idea of any thing that does not affect our senses, must conclude, that our not perceiving is no proof that there may not be millions of different beings and substances round us, besides those that affect our senses, of which, and of their powers or actions, we can know nothing.

As man has not the least idea of the matter or substance of his own soul, or of its manner of acting, or being acted upon; so he has no capacity of reasoning about it, by comparing it with things perceived: He cannot, for example, compare it with space, or figure; he cannot say it is, or is not comprehended within limits of any kind; he cannot say it moves, or does not move, or at all imagine how it is supported, or acts.

We perceive how a solid body is moved by the impulse of another solid body, or of a fluid, and is continued in motion so long as the impulse lasts; and we can conceive how a plant or animal may be supported, may grow, or decay, mechanically, by the

operation of different material agents: but we can have no conception how the soul acts on itself, or on matter; how it is acted upon, or how it is supported.

And being so much in the dark concerning the principal part of ourselves, the only knowing thing in us, it is no wonder we should be incapable of framing any just idea of that invisible spiritual Being by which we, and every other created thing, were made.

Our Author thinks, that, by the light of nature only, men could not possibly have discovered whether this material system, which, he says, is so framed as to be a self-moving machine, existed from eternity, and was the cause and support of itself, and of every thing in it; or whether it was contrived, and the parts of it put together, by an higher hand. But, be that as it will, and were it even to be supposed that man, by thorough observation, and by a just induction, could discover *à posteriori* the existence of some eternal self-existent cause, whose work this creation is; our Author seems to be well warranted, when he affirms, that it is presumptuous in man, because it is impossible, to frame such an idea of this invisible Agent, from his own scanty notions and apprehensions, as shall be the standard and test, by which to try every thing that is, or may be, in question concerning the first cause.

Man may, for example, be in the right to attribute all possible perfections to this Being; but, till he can determine what is absolute perfection, (taking in the circle of all possible beings, their actions and attributes,) it is impossible for him with justice to conclude, that because this or that seems to him to be perfection, it therefore, according to the measure which he conceives of it, belongs to the Author of nature.

And though it should be admitted that man, by the light of nature, could discover the dependance of this created system on a self-existent Creator; yet it

is certain he cannot frame to himself any idea of that Being, his nature, substance, powers, or manner of existing or acting; and that if there is any knowledge of such things amongst men, it must come from some other source than that of nature and observation.

From this state of man's nature the Author infers an indispensable necessity for revelation; if God intended that man should know him, his goodness, power, wisdom, and mercy; should make returns of gratitude, love, adoration, and obedience; and should conform himself to that order, which by the divine will was established; And that the knowledge of every thing that was to be known, and believed, was revealed, our Author insists will demonstrably be proved, when what is revealed, is understood and considered.

A revelation therefore, our Author insists, was made by God to man, at two different periods: the first, just after the creation, and upon the fall: the second, in the wilderness to the Israelites, and on various occasions afterwards, by different methods of communication, not to mention the appearances to the patriarchs; to restore the knowledge of the first revelation, which had been pretty much lost, or misunderstood, and to fix and ascertain it by writing, (a method, as the Author will have it, then first revealed,) so as it should never after be obliterated or left dubious.

To begin with the last: the first thing that is met with in the books of Moses, is an assertion that God created the heavens and the earth, which is followed by a particular account of the order and manner of the formation of all that was created, till the work was perfected. After which, God is said to have rested; and our Author asserts, that it is also said, the perfect machine, then left to itself, carried on all the operations in this system, by certain known laws of

mechanism, explained by Moses, and throughout the scriptures by the other inspired penmen.

The sum of what our Author avers to be the doctrine of the scriptures, on this head, is, That, besides the differently formed particles of which this earth, and the several metals, minerals, and other solid substances in it, and in the other solid orbs, are composed, God at first created all that subtile fluid which now is, and from the creation has been, in the condition of fire, light, or air, and goes under the name of *the heavens*.

The particles of this fluid, (which our Author calls *atoms*;) when they are single and uncompounded, are inconceivably minute, and so subtile as to pervade the pores of all substances whatever, whether solid, or fluid, without any great difficulty or resistance. When they are pushed forward in straight lines by the action of fire, or are reflected or refracted in straight lines, they produce light, and are so called; but when the interposition of any opaque body hinders their progress in straight lines, they pass, but cease to produce light.

These particles or atoms, which, when moving in straight lines, produce light; and, if collected, and put into another sort of motion, would produce heat and fire, are, as our Author insists, when the force impelling them ceases to act with vigour, and when their motion is retarded, so made, that they are apt to adhere in small masses or grains, which the Author calls *spirit*, or *air*; and is of the same kind and texture with that air which we daily breathe, and which we feel in wind when it blows.

The sun, which our Author places at the centre of this system, is an orb included in a vast collection of this subtile matter in the action of fire, which continually melts down all the air that is brought into it by the powerful action of the firmament or expansion,

hereafter to be explained, into the subtile matter just mentioned; and with an immense force sends forth, in perpetual streams of light, this same subtile matter so melted down, to the circumference of this system; which the Author says is bounded, as he avers the space comprehended within it is absolutely full.

The matter thus melted down at the orb of the sun into light, must, as every thing is full, either stand still, or make its way outwards to the circumference, being forced by the particles, which are concentered into air at the utmost extremities; and return towards the sun, where the fluid being most subtile gives least resistance, and takes up the place that the light left.

And therefore this endless uninterrupted flux of matter from the sun in light, in place of being an expence that should destroy that orb, (which our Author takes to be an insupportable objection to Sir Isaac Newton's scheme,) is the very means of preserving it, and everything else in this system, in its action and reaction, by pressing back perpetual supplies of air to be melted down into light, and thereby produces a continual circulation. These perpetual fluxes or tides of matter outwards and inwards, in every point, from the centre to the circumference, mechanically, and necessarily, as our Author insists, produce that constant gyration in the earth and the planets round their own centres, and round the sun; and he avers, though he has not yet thought fit to explain it, that the same principle, with some circumstances, arising from the situation and fluxes of light coming from the other orbs, will account also for the motions of the moon.

Besides the rotation of the orbs, the Author affirms, that the adverse motions of the light pushing towards the circumference, and the air pushing towards the centre with immense force, forms a general expan-

sion, (as he translates the word rendered *firmament*,) which brings that stress or compressure on all bodies it meets with, that binds together solids, keeps fluids as they were, causes the variation of times and seasons, the raising of water, the production of vegetables and animals, and, in short, produces all the effects falsely ascribed to gravity or attraction; continues motion without the assistance of the unmechanical principle of projection; produces, supplies, and supports vegetables, fruits and animals; in short, produces almost all the effects and phænomena in nature.

These are some of the outlines of our Author's Philosophy; very repugnant, indeed to the notions commonly received; but the authorities, by which he avers he can support them, are two, and they are pretty considerable.

First, He says that Moses and the prophets, who, by divine authority, were to reveal and explain to mankind how the operations in this system were carried on, have in plain terms said so. And,

Secondly, He affirms that he can, by comparing every true observation and experiment that have at any time been made by the Royal Society or its members, or by any foreign societies of learned men; and by a great many observations and experiments made by himself, to which the curious have hitherto very little attended, with the system of philosophy revealed in the scriptures; shew, that all the various phænomena of nature are to be accounted for mechanically thereby; and that the modern systems, as well as all others not taken from the scriptures, are false, absurd, and unmechanical.

It is because this looks highly improbable, if not impossible to most men, that an examination of our Author's notions are neglected: but as, in proportion as it is improbable, it would confirm the scrip-

tures, should it be found true; I confess my desire is the greater, that the men, qualified to judge, would examine it.

As it is extremely new, so, at first sight, it seems odd, that our Author should suppose it necessary for the Creator to give to mankind a course of philosophy, so to speak; but, to remove this difficulty, he reasons to this effect.

The end to which a rational discerning soul was given to man, was, that by the organs of the body he might perceive the beauty, the order, the harmony of nature; and thence receive ideas of the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of its Author, which should lead to admiration, love, duty, dependance, adoration, acknowledgment, and a desire of further knowledge, and vision of what in this world man can take in by borrowed ideas only.

If the mechanism of nature had not been revealed to man, he possibly never would have discovered it to any certainty; at least, would not have discovered it for ages: and so long those incentives to admiration, love, service, and adoration, would have been wanting.

If the mechanism could have been understood, without the further discovery that this self-moving machine is no more than an inanimate piece of clock-work, created, as well as put together, by the supreme, intelligent, beneficent Being, it might have led man to place his admiration and worship on the machine, in place of him that made it, as the mistaken part of mankind always did.

And therefore, if before man could know the obligations he had to the supreme intelligent Being as his Redeemer, that is, before the fall, the sole light he could view him in, to produce admiration, love, duty, service, and desire of further union, was that of the infinitely wise, powerful, and Beneficent Cre-

ator and Supporter; it seems necessary to conclude, that those discoveries, which he could not make of himself, certainly were made to him.

And this the rather, that as man was the last piece formed of the creation, and as even his body was framed before the soul, without which it could not perceive, was breathed into it, he could not have any mean to know how, where, or by whom or what this world and all its tenants were produced; and, by the nature of the thing, could not in many ages, if at all, arrive at any knowledge of what was certainly intended to be the object of his meditation, and the cause of his love, duty, and service.

Wherefore as it was necessary he should speedily be instructed, our Author thinks Moses has intimated to us that he was, in telling us that God was pleased to plant a garden for him, which he was to cultivate and keep. Our Author, observing that gardens amongst the antient nations, and planted groves, were sacred, and places of worship; reflecting that it was but a poor employment for the chief of the creation to cultivate a garden, whilst the earth, not being yet cursed, nor man doomed to hard labour, might produce spontaneously fruits fit for him, especially the trees being of God's own planting; and observing that the words translated *to till* and *to keep*, also properly signify *to worship* and *observe*; and taking in a great many other circumstances, too numerous to be here recited, concludes, that this garden was planted and dressed in the form of a plan or scheme, to shew the situations, motions, and actions of the heavenly bodies, and the powers in this system picture-ways, or hieroglyphically, for man's comprehending and remembering more certainly the positions, motions, and influences of the heavenly bodies, and the actions of fire, light, and air, or, as our Au-

thor calls it, spirit, in circulation. Several of those bodies, or of the effects flowing from their motions or situations, and from the circulation of light and air, might be represented by trees of different forms, or growths; and the circulation might itself be represented by some of those trees, or perhaps by the waters in Eden, which by the four rivers were plentifully furnished.

And as the Author understands this garden to have been for instruction, and the intent of Moses's recording that circumstance to be, to let us know that man was so instructed; so he lays a pretty deal of weight upon another matter, related in the same history, of God's bringing the several animals before Adam, to the end he might give them proper names.

As the names Adam gave to animals were expressive of the chief talents or instincts of those animals, and afterwards in the *Hebrew* language came generally to be roots for words to signify the passions, actions, or inclinations which those instincts or talents raised the ideas of; our Author concludes that God caused these animals to exhibit to Adam, for his information and instruction, their several qualities, particularities, and instincts, to help him forward in the knowledge that was to be communicated to him.

Our Author then perceiving clearly, that a system of natural philosophy, or a description of this machine, was published by Moses, when revelation was, as he terms it, republished in writing; observing that there was full as much occasion, or rather more, for a discovery of this system to Adam, before he had opportunities to make observations, than afterwards; and discovering the true sense and meaning of those intimations that Moses gives, con-

cerning the transactions in the garden of Eden; concludes that Adam was by God instructed in the knowledge of the powers and operations of this system, and of the duty and regard owing to the Author of it, as well as of so much of the nature, powers, and attributes of the Author and Creator of it, as the children of Israel were acquainted with, by the republication of revelation by Moses, in writing.

As to the manner of this first revelation, our Author, proceeding upon the principles already mentioned, that man is incapable of any ideas but what are taken in by the senses, concludes that God could not give to man, whilst clogged with a body, the true idea of himself, or any otherwise represent himself, than by referring for a similitude to that thing in this material system that bore the nearest resemblance in perfection, power, nature and operation; and therefore he supposes, what he afterwards affirms he has proved, that, to give man some image or likeness of himself, he pointed to the machine by which this system is supported; the heavens consisting of matter in three different conditions, fire, light, and air, or spirit, as the Author calls it, which mutually support each other, and necessarily concur in the joint action of that powerful machine, by which every material thing is moved, supported, and preserved; exhibiting thereby some similitude, from whence an idea might be taken of his essence, personality, power, and manner of action.

As Adam gave names to all living creatures, and the use and intent of a name is, to raise in the hearer an idea of the thing named; our Author supposes, that every other creature, that came within the cognisance of the first man, had also a name given to it; and insists that the heavens, or the machine,

described as above, was by Adam called *The Names*, by way of eminence, to signify that they were the representatives of the Deity, that from which the idea of him was to be taken. *Shem* in the *Hebrew* language signifies *name*; and he avers that *shemim* is the masculine plural of that noun, and signifies properly *names*; and by this he understands that the heavens, or *shemim*, were always thought of, and spoken of, by those who were rightly informed by revelation, as the representation or material object expressive of the Deity.

If mankind was thus instructed in the powers and operations of nature, the lesson would not soon, or easily wear out; because every observation, every symptom in nature would, day after day, justify it; but the fact that this knowledge was revealed, might soon be forgotten by the succeeding generations of men, or be disbelieved, and with it the knowledge of the invisible Author of all. Men who saw this machine perfect and self-moving, might doubt whether it had not self-existence in it; and whether, as it was the immediate cause and producer of all their comforts, it was not the only powerful being to which they had any obligations, and owed duty and service; whence by degrees, worship might be misplaced, being transferred from the true invisible God to the visible representation of him, in which all power and perfection might be lodged, by the opinions of vain imaginary men, who forgot or disregarded revelation.

That this in fact was the case, that the early deserters of the true God placed their worship and service on the heavens, the Author proves at great length, and with great strength of evidence, as a good deal of his reasoning depends on it.

If the scriptures are to be decisive in this point,

it is put beyond doubt, by the many formal declarations that the crime of the nations, and of the apostate Israelites, was their serving the heavens, the host of heavens, the queen of heaven, as it is translated; the sun, moon, and stars; and false gods, Baal, Moloch, &c. which our Author shews were representations of some of the powers or attributes of the heavens; and by the many miracles wrought to convince mankind, that they misplaced their worship, and that the invisible God had those powers under his command.

And were their credit in any degree questionable, such remains as we have of the ancient heathen worship would shew with abundant evidence, that till they lost the knowledge of their philosophy, (which happened by accidents largely described by our Author,) they continually retained the powers or attributes of the heavens for the objects of their religious service.

Our Author admits, that the more modern heathens, (by these he means the Greeks and Romans, and their successors in point of time,) who had lost the knowledge of nature, lost also the knowledge of the object of their worship, and the sense of the very names by which their gods were called or distinguished; so that, though they adored the air, they knew not for what: but then he avers that the ancients (that is, all the nations that preceded the change of language, by which knowledge was retained) adored the heavens, or some powers in them, or attributes of them.

To this end he has collected the names of all the gods of the nations mentioned in scripture, together with the names or titles of their temples, in his treatise of *The names and attributes of the Trinity of the Gentiles*, and has offered an examination and analysis

of those names, together with some account of the services paid to those supposed deities, and the many reproaches made by the prophets to their votaries and worshippers; which, with great evidence, seems to shew that these gods were indeed none other than the heavens, or some supposed powers in them.

The very general adoration paid by the ancients to the heavenly bodies; the worship of the sun, of fire, of light, &c. that prevailed in the earliest times; the conjectural philosophy of the late heathens, the Greeks and Romans, which centred in opinions, that by their Jupiter, Apollo, &c. was meant either the *æther*, or the sun, or the active force of nature in general, justifies, to those who value such authorities, our Author's sentiments.

Our Author is out of humour with those who fancy the ancients such idiots as to have worshipped brutes, reptiles, insects, or any inanimate things.

Let the worship in Egypt be an instance. The respect they had to Apis, to a bull or cow, was not at all paid to that animal. All mankind knows in relation to Egypt, because their monuments were better preserved than those of other nations, that they wrought by hieroglyphicks; that is, that they expressed their ideas by representing the figures of animals, or of inanimate things, of circles, triangles, &c. in such series and order, as to convey their meaning; in so doing, they must fix upon some things easily distinguished, to represent what could not so easily be painted, or by figure expressed. And if their fancy led them to express the fire at the sun, by the front or head of a bull or heifer, the respect shewed to that animal was evidently meant to the fire at the sun; and the Egyptians did

not worship the bull or heifer, but the sun; no more than in their hieroglyphical writing a bull or serpent was meant, when the figures of those animals were represented.

Our Author goes through a great many mistakes of the moderns in this particular, which are dishonourable to the understandings of the ancients, and amongst these takes notice particularly of one, *viz.* the reproach to the Egyptians, that they worshipped an onion; and indeed the scripture upbraids the Israelites with their strong lusting after the onions of Egypt.

But our Author says, the moderns will cease to abuse the ancients on this score, when they take the trouble to cut up the common onion, and to satisfy their own eyes that it consists of seven different spheres, or *involucra*, one within another, in the way that the ancients understood the seven spheres in this system; and was therefore more proper than any other thing that can be thought of, to represent the solar system in their hieroglyphical writings, and religious representation.

He takes notice, that, from the hieroglyphical representation of the heavens, or perhaps of fire, amongst the Egyptians by Apis, the Israelites' calf of gold in the wilderness, and the brace of calves of Jeroboam, who had his education in Egypt, sprang: not that the Israelites at first, or Jeroboam afterwards, dreamed of any powers or virtues in those calves; but that they imagined, they put themselves thereby under the protection of the heavens, of which they took that idol to be the approved emblem.

To all their hieroglyphical representations of their Deity, he observes they added a crown by way of ornament or distinction; (as for much the same rea-

son, though in another respect, which he elsewhere explains, they did to their priests.) This crown was a circle of gold, the most precious metal; from which arose, quite round the circumference, plates of gold, formed like pyramids, imitating rays of light; and in the intervals between those shining rays, spaces of the same pyramidal form, but pointed inwards, to represent, as our Author says, the irradiation or flux of the light outwards from the sun, and the pressure or return of the air or spirit inwards, by which he insists this machine is supported.

And, in a great many more of their ornaments and emblems, he finds evident traces of what their service and religion pointed at, to wit, a recognition of the powers in the heavens, as that from whence all their blessings flowed, and on which all their dependence was settled.

As this mistaking, which, in effect, is denying the true God, was evidently the crime of those Heathens who were contemporary with the Israelitish state; so, our Author thinks, it was the offence of the antediluvian world, for which men merited to be cut off all but one family. His reasons for so thinking are numerous, but what to me appears the strongest, is drawn from the punishment; which was, as our Author insists, the controuling the settled operations of the powers that were supposed to be independent and omnipotent: the destroying the earth, and with it rebellious man; the reforming the earth after that dissolution, and preserving those persons by whom it was to be re-peopled, from the general ruin, to be witnesses for God of the power by him exerted, and to instruct their posterity in the service of that Being by whom they were preserved.

Our Author talks of destroying the earth, which, he says, is in formal words affirmed by Moses: he speaks of forcing up the waters of the abyfs through apertures, which, he says, were left for a communication with the waters above; dissolving the shell, reforming it with new apertures and fissures, and sending back those waters again through cracks and fissures in the shell of stone, that environed the abyfs, to their former residence: he speaks also of great quantities of terrestrial matter carried down through those fissures and openings along with the waters into the abyfs; that matter formed at the centre of the hollow sphere into a solid orb, like to a kernel floating in the waters, and very many effects in the motion of the waters, and of this earth, to be accounted for by that collection of waters, and this floating orb; all which, he asserts, are to be gathered from what the scripture reveals, and will account mechanically for the many various appearances, which hitherto have been only guessed at, from schemes founded on false and impossible principles.

As an instance of the perfection of the natural knowledge that is to be met with in the scriptures, and of the absurdity of those who charge the writers of them with ignorance, he avers, that the loadstone and its effects are frequently, at least six times, directly spoken of; that the reason and cause of the mysterious phænomena of magnetism are clearly to be gathered from the revealed philosophy.

And, however Freethinkers may make the story of the flood an objection to the veracity of the scriptures, and may laugh at the account which our Author gives of it from the sacred writers, he affirms, that as he has had the curiosity to make collections of most of the different sorts of things, and each of the

same sort differently formed under ground, and numerous observations on the situation of things in the bowels of the earth; he can, by evidence to the eye, convince any rational man, that the account he gives of the destruction at the flood, and reformation of the earth, from the scriptures, is graphically true.

Noah and his family, who had remained in dutiful allegiance to the invisible God, were, doubtless, by this powerful piece of vengeance over the rebellious world, convinced of the supremacy of the Deity over his rival the heavens, whose power they had seen suspended, and baffled; and their posterity continued dutiful till the time of building the tower of Babel, when nature and imagination began to work again.

All translations have made a very odd spot of work of this piece of history. They have supposed it says, that, before this accident, all men spoke the same language; that, afraid of another deluge, they set about building a tower, whose top should reach to the heavens; that they did this to get them a name; and that God became so jealous of this attempt, that it was worth his while to work a very extraordinary miracle, to confound their language, so as one could not understand what the other said, and to disperse them over the face of the earth: and from this notable event the birth of many languages, and the first peopling of many nations, is sought.

Our Author, who insists that a perfect knowledge of the *Hebrew* language will deliver the scripture from many absurdities, with which it is by the translations saddled, says,

In the *first* place, the text does not bear that all the earth was of one language, or that their language was confounded. It says, indeed, that all the

the earth was of one *ſbaphab*, lip; and afterwards that God ſaid he would confound their lip.

Now, our Author obſerves what, upon comparing all the texts, holds very truly, that the *Hebrews* had two words nearly of the ſame ſignification to thoſe that did not advert to the diſtinction; *leſbun*, which ſignifies tongue, and *ſbaphab*, which ſignifies lip: but which, in the propriety of their expreſſion, they never confounded; uſing *leſbun*, perpetually, to ſignify language, and *ſbaphab* to ſignify religious ſervice, or confeſſion, and never to ſignify language. All therefore the text ſays, is, that, before the building of Babel, the whole earth had one and the ſame religious ſervice or confeſſion; and that, upon that attempt, the new confeſſion, which the projectors of this building intended to ſet up, was to be confounded, which begun in the diſperſion of the undertakers.

In the *next* place, the translators render the text as if it ſaid, *Let us build us a tower, whoſe top ſhall reach to the heavens, that we may make us a name, leſt we be diſperſed, &c.* And ſurely, beſides other improprieties in this ſuppoſed deſign, it muſt appear a very ridiculous project, to build a tower, that ſhould defend againſt deſtruction by a flood, in ſo very low a ground as the valley of Shinar; or from diſperſion, which want of proviſion would force them to. But our Author obſerves, that the *Hebrew* text ſays nothing of reaching to the heavens; that word is a mere ſupplement from the translators' fancy, who were ignorant that the word rendered *tower* ſignifies *temple*, and therefore did not perceive the obvious meaning of the whole; which is, that theſe wicked men, who lived in a country where, till then, there was no difference of religion, the whole earth being of one confeſſion, apoſtaſiſed to the ſervice and worſhip of the heavens; and encouraged one another to

build a city and temple, the top whereof should be sacred to the heavens; and that God, to check this early relapse into the religion of their antediluvian forefathers, thought fit to confound, not their language, but their confession or liturgy, that is, to make them differ about the manner and form of the intended service and worship; which had the effect, at that time, of marring their irreligious project; of making them fall out amongst themselves, of making them desist from their enterprize.

Taking the thing thus, and supposing these men mistook the heavens for a deity, there was sense in their building a temple, and on it an altar, to that being that could, according to their supposition, prevent their destruction and dispersion: and it was well and mercifully done, on the part of God, to make them differ about their intended service, and thereby to fall out amongst themselves, and relinquish the undertaking. But, translating the text as our expositors have done, a most absurd and impracticable attempt is supposed to call upon the interposition of the Deity, in a very unnecessary miracle; which, at the same time, our Author avers, appears not to have been wrought; because the same scriptures shew, the whole earth was of one language, though not of one lip or religious confession, for several ages after.

As our Author has delivered the scriptures, by his acquaintance with *Hebrew*, from this notorious absurdity, with which the ignorance of the translators had stained it; he, on an infinity almost of other occasions, interposes to set their false interpretations to rights. According to his construction of the language, it is no where in the text said, that the earth stands still, and that the sun goes round it: but, on the contrary, it is, on every proper occasion, incul-

ated that the sun stands still, fixed, and that the earth runs round.

After the flood God did not put the rainbow first in the cloud, as a sign to man; but he constituted, or gave (which is the *Hebrew* word) that bow, which naturally was in the cloud, as a memorial of his promise not to destroy the earth again by water.

And in multitudes of other cases our Author brings, as he says, from the genuine construction of the text, a very commodious sense, where the translation is, not to say worse, hardly intelligible.

As our Author's general proposition, that the mechanical powers in the heavens was the deity set up by the heathen, against the God of nature and of Israel, is a key to the understanding a vast number of expressions, expostulations, and claims used throughout by the writers of the scriptures, which passed unheeded, or were thought trivial, and accommodated to the mistaken notions of ignorant men heretofore; so the same position, as he manages it, is of very great service in shewing the propriety and perfect intention and use of very many miracles, miraculous appearances, and religious institutions, which no man hitherto has pretended to shew the adequate reason, use, or occasion for.

If the religion of the rebellious Heathen was to ascribe all power to the machine of the heavens, in the conditions of fire, light, and air, or spirit, but principally in that of fire, on the acting whereof all the rest seemed to depend; then it was proper for the Deity, when a new revelation and religious œconomy was to be established in the family of Abraham, to pass between the parts of the creatures appointed to be divided, in the appearance of fire, light, and smoke.

It was proper to shew his superiority over the gods of Sodom and Gomorrah, by punishing them who worshipped fire, by fire sent from heaven: it was proper, when Moses was to be sent upon his mission, to appear to him in the bush in the form of fire.

It was proper, when the contest was between the priests of Baal and the prophet Elijah, and when the formal trial was to be, whether Baal or Jehovah was the true God, by this test, whether the offering of the one or of the other should be first consumed by fire sent from heaven; it was proper, I say, in that case, for Jehovah to give proof of his power, by sending down fire, and consuming the sacrifice, water, &c. And,

Not to mention a great many other instances, when the captains of fifty were successively sent out by the king of Israel, who then fell in with the worship of the heavens, in defiance of the true God, to bring Elijah to him a prisoner; it was proper to punish their presumption, and to manifest the power of Jehovah over the heavens, to consume those captains by fire sent from heaven.

And though the many miracles wrought in Egypt, and in the wilderness, to which, for evidence of the power and supremacy of Jehovah, there are many references and appeals made by the later writers of the Scriptures, seem to our modern wisemen, who think that God might have done the business a much shorter way, very unnecessary and superfluous, and as such are disbelieved; yet our Author apprehends they were absolutely necessary to the design of Jehovah, and of the utmost importance to mankind, for settling the point in dispute, between the followers of the true, and those of the false god.

The intent of these various miracles, our Author

says, was, in the face and seeing of the most powerful and populous, the most learned, the most superstitiously addicted nation then in the world to the service of the heavens, to shew the power of Jehovah over their pretended gods in all their attributes and powers, and over their priests; and, in so doing, to convict that people, and all that should hear of those transactions, and still remain in the same error; and to convince the people that he was about to separate to himself, so fully of his authority, that they should never (bearing these things in mind) apostatise.

For these ends, after the magicians or priests of the fictitious gods were foiled, Jehovah permitted Pharaoh to harden his heart, or to resist; until by repeated miracles he had, to the sight of all men, asserted his superiority over his rivals, in controuling all the actions and powers for which they were falsely thought gods, and making them afflict their votaries. The sun and light were turned into a palpable darkness, for three days. The air was turned pestilential; the very dust of the earth was turned noxious; the river, which was emblematically sacred, in whose waters they purified themselves, and on whose banks they worshipped, was turned into blood; the wind brought locusts to destroy the votaries of the wind. All these plagues, and many more, which our Author explains the propriety of at length in his *Essay towards a Natural History of the Bible*, were so directed as to leave the Israelites, unhurt, witnesses of the superiority of their God, of the obedience of the heavens, and of the distraction and folly of those who worshipped them.

Hitherto miracles have been looked upon, generally, by mankind, as so many prodigious, unnatural, and therefore wonderful events, surpassing the

power of man to compass; brought about by divine power, to vouch the mission of the person by whose hands they were wrought, and to gain credit to what he should reveal, or deliver. But, if our Author is to be followed, they are to be considered as tending to a higher purpose, and are so many manifestations of the power of the true God; to gain credit to himself, in contradiction to the pretended powers of the heavens, that were set up in opposition: and are so sorted and chosen, as best to prove that there is no inherent essential powers in the machine, the heavens; but that all inherent and essential power is in Jehovah alone; whose servants, at his command, could alter or suspend the course of nature.

It was, according to our Author, to confirm the children of Israel in this faith, that the wind (in *Hebrew* the spirit) separated the waters of the Red sea, and made them, contrary to the ordinary course of nature, stand on either side in heaps; that, by Moses, Jehovah shewed, in miniature, the same power that was exercised in destroying the earth at the flood, by cracking the strata of stone, and making a spring of water gush out of a rock, upon the touch of a rod; that the God of the nations, in the appearance of fire, light, and cloud, or spirit, which the Author says (as shall be hereafter explained) was the emblem of the true God, was forced to attend, to lead, and to protect the camp of Israel; that the air was made to rain down food upon the armies of Jehovah; and that Jehovah was pleased, miraculously, and at an appointed time, to shew himself in the appearance of fire on Sinai, and from thence to deliver the law, and offer a covenant to the Israelites.

If all these things shall be understood to be done to settle the contest, and establish the authority of Jehovah over the heavens, his rivals at that time, and

all other pretended deities that thereafter might, by the madness or ignorance of men, be set up;

Then the scope and intent of the law, given in the ten commandments, will be better understood; and the meaning of the religious œconomy, ceremonies, and services, that thereafter were established, will be more fully comprehended.

The first four commands, by the confession of every body, are intended to assert and inculcate the sovereignty of the Deity, and the exclusive title to service that is in Jehovah, the Creator and Preserver of all things; in contradiction to all other pretended gods, whose service is prohibited and guarded against in the most express manner; prohibitions that do not seem necessary to be authorised and introduced with so much pomp, and by so many miracles, if the worship of a stock or a stone, a red heifer or a calf, taken in themselves, and not considered as the representation of that being (the heavens) in which all material power in this system was known to reside, had been the only thing to be dreaded.

The other commands are generally called the moral law, and it is commonly thought that they were intended for a system of social law, as they seem to prohibit trespasses against society.

But in this our Author differs, and says, that when men are satisfied, as they may easily be from scripture and from history, that the worshippers of the heavens called their gods their fathers and mothers, and worshipped them as such; that they held it a religious and acceptable service to immolate human sacrifices, nay to offer their first-born to fire; that they held it lawful, nay pleasing to some of their gods, to steal and rob for sacrifice; that prostitution of their wives and daughters, in honour of their gods, was a flagrant part of their religion, &c. the reasons for

giving these commands, commonly called moral, will appear to be the same as for giving the rest, to wit, to settle and establish the worship of the true, though invisible God, and to restrain from the worship of the heavens, and the chief abominations practised in that worship.

As to the moral or social law, according to our Author, it was not the immediate view or purpose of God, in the law given from the mount, to establish or explain it. The competition for superiority with the false god, the heavens, was the point to be settled; and the abominations of the profane worship of that fictitious god were to be prohibited, and eradicated out of the service of the children of Israel.

The social law required no publication, no authority from Jehovah by miracles to confirm it; except in those points in which the absurd service of the heathens had encroached upon it. It was no question amongst the heathens, no more than it was amongst the children of Abraham, whether it was unlawful to kill, or to commit adultery, on any other occasion, except for the honour of their pretended deities in religious service; and therefore, according to our Author, there was no occasion for settling these social duties, excepting so far as the mistakes in worship made it necessary.

As the principal view of the decalogue, and all the pomp and train of miracles with which it was introduced, was to settle the superiority of Jehovah over his rivals, the heavens; so our Author observes, that all the memorials of these miracles, the services, feasts, sabbaths, rites of sacrifice, ceremonies, the tabernacle, the temple, their ornaments and furniture, the institution of priesthood, with the ordinances relating thereto, the priests' garments, &c. were intended to commemorate, to acknowledge, and for

ever to keep in view the evidence of the superiority then settled; and to explain by emblems, a sort of language then well understood, the nature, residence, and manner of acting of God, in opposition to that of his rivals; and his merciful disposition and purpose towards his creatures; all which the Author has in a great measure explained, and applied in a very new and surprising manner; and promises, on a proper occasion, fully to explain and shew the application of the rest.

Though a system of philosophy, religion and religious service was thus revealed in writing by the hand of Moses in the wilderness, as our Author affirms; yet he is far from thinking that the world was left without information or direction in these matters till this time; on the contrary, he asserts, that the instruction and law given by Moses, was no more than a republication in writing of that law originally given to Adam, before, and upon the fall.

From the goodness, the wisdom, and the justice of God; from the necessities of the new-made creature man, and from the hints above-mentioned, of God's planting a garden in Eden, and bringing all living creatures before Adam; our Author concludes that nature, its operations, and dependance on Jehovah, was fully explained to the first man; and thence his duty, as well as chief good, discovered to him, in admiring, adoring, and with love and gratitude serving the Author of his being.

Whether any, and what services, by way of acknowledgment, were at this time required of Adam, does not appear: but it does appear that he was prohibited, under the penalty of death, from eating of the fruit of a certain tree in the middle of the garden, which is called *the tree of knowledge of good and evil*.

Our Author supposes that this tree, said to stand in the middle of the garden, was, in the plan of that garden, intended to represent the sun in the centre of this system, which keeps it all a going; and that the prohibition to eat the fruit of it, emblematically forewarned Adam from trusting to its support in any thing, but what, as a machine without knowledge, it was appointed to do; and he suspects that this very forbidden fruit was the *malum Persicum* famed amongst the heathens: in Greece afterwards taken to be the laurel, sacred to Apollo, the god of wisdom, and which was supposed capable of giving knowledge and wisdom.

He observes that this command was first broken by Eve, (who had it but at second hand from Adam, and who did not know the natures and several qualities and capacities of brute creatures, as Adam did,) at the instigation of the devil, by a serpent, who as a bait proposed improvement in knowledge; a very laudable motive, had not the method of gaining it been prohibited.

He imagines that Adam was not deceived as Eve was; but that seeing her lost, his passion for her made him desperately resolve to share the same fortune with her, and to be joined with her in the crime and the punishment: and that this was the reason why, when their eyes were opened, they not only became ashamed of their crime, but at the sight of those parts which raised in each mutual desires; the violence of which induced woman to seduce man into a participation of her guilt, and induced man to yield to ruin and death, rather than be divided from her.

Those who are delighted with searching into the origin and usage of words, will not be disagreeably entertained by a reflection or two our Author makes

on this occasion. He says that *aven*, which properly signifies the act of cohabitation with woman, is in the *Hebrew* language made the root for iniquity or wickedness; and that *petah*, which principally signifies that part of the body that Eve is supposed to have hid, in the same language is made expressive of seducing, over-persuading, deceiving.

And our Author thinks, that, to keep up the memory of this crime, and of the principal motive that induced man to fall into it; as also to be a caveat against being carried too far by that motive, on future occasions, circumcision was instituted; which took place amongst the nations before Abraham's days, and was revived only in his family; and re-enacted in the law of Moses, as several other ancient institutions were.

Our Author insists, that man could not have sustained his life any considerable time after the fall, though God had not been pleased by any act to inflict death upon him. The consciousness of the displeasure of God, the remembrance of felicity lost, and the apprehensions of the just vengeance of the offended Deity, must have produced strange distractions in the mind of unhappy Adam. That he lived, then, is a demonstration that he received some comfort, some hint of the possibility of a reconciliation; and that he actually had promises that comforted him, the scriptures in formal words reveal: *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.*

Though the account of this promise and those hopes of peace is very short, yet our Author thinks, that, at this time, a proper and intelligible account was given to man of the manner and means of his reconciliation, and restitution to the protection of God; and that rites, observances, and services were instituted, to keep in mind, and acknowledge the sove-

reignty of the Creator; the crime of man, and his forfeiture; and the promise and means of peace and salvation.

The foundations of his opinion, besides what is already said, are in general: That from the scripture it appears, before the publication of the law in Sinai, believers and unbelievers were in the practice and possession of many, or most of those rites and institutions: which must have depended on some antecedent authority, that was common to all. And by the universal consent of all profane authors it appears, that after the æra of Moses, the same institutions and observances had taken place over all the known world; though no body supposes they owed their origin to the laws of a nation that the rest of the world held in dislike and contempt.

To instance in a few; offering sacrifice, and that by fire, was in use before the written law: Abel offered; Noah sacrificed; Abraham and his contemporaries did so; Job practised it; it was used by Balaam: it was practised for thanksgiving; for atonement; for binding covenants: at the same time it is obvious, that naturally it had no tendency to either of those ends; and, as it was universal, must needs owe its beginning to an institution, that was authoritative over all.

That sacrifice was held propitiatory among the Heathens, cannot be denied by any that is conversant in their writings; their histories, their poems are full of it: and, if there could remain any doubt, Balaam's repeated attempts to placate the Deity, and the over-warm zeal of those who gave the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul; who sacrificed their first-born to Moloch, to atone for themselves, their family, and people, and to procure his favour and protection, are absolute proofs,

Our Author, on this subject, takes notice, that God is said to have clothed our first parents with the skins of beasts, that part of the offering that by the written law appears to have fallen to the priest's share; and thence concludes, that the beasts, from which those skins were taken, had been sacrificed.

Another instance is in first-fruits, which appear amongst all the Heathens to have been offered as an acknowledgment to their several deities. This practice is as old as the days of Cain and Abel, who cannot be supposed to have begun it without institution for their authority.

A third instance is in the institution of priesthood, or giving to the first-born, or eldest of the family, a right to approach the altar, and to offer sacrifice; which, in the Jewish dispensation, was changed from the first-born to the family of Levi. If the priest was, in one consideration, a representation of the same person, that the sacrifice represented in another, it is reasonable to conclude, that the institution of priesthood, and of sacrifice, bore the same date.

From the expression, Gen. iv. 3. our Author collects, that there were appointed times, perhaps new moons, and settled feasts, from the beginning, for sacrifice, service, and acknowledgment.

And, from Moses's account of the creation, and what followed it, nothing is more clear, than that the rest of the sabbath was from the beginning appointed, for preserving a perpetual memorial of the creation, completed by Jehovah: and for yielding to man a fit opportunity, free from labour, toil and care, to contemplate the high and beneficent attributes of God in his works; and to dispose the mind to acknowledgment, duty, love, praise and adoration, the only tribute that is truly suited to the nature of that perfect Being; and the only exercise that seems pro-

per for qualifying man to desire, and to enjoy a nearer union with his God.

As our Author finds, in the written law, several particular sorts of wood, distinguished by their uses in the tabernacle; and several sorts of boughs and branches of trees, appointed to be carried and used in the feast of tabernacles; he concludes, that those trees were, in the days of Adam, so to speak, consecrated as emblems or memorials of particular persons, actions, or things, that they were to represent.

A garden was planted in Eden; and I have hinted at the use for which our Author thinks it was dressed there. The patriarchs, particularly Abraham, sacrificed under oaks; nay planted oaks for the end of sacrifice and religious service under them. The ancients planted gardens, groves, &c. upon religious accounts; and very likely held particular trees in respect, as representing particular powers or actions.

The oak, which is in Hebrew *elah*, our Author says, was appointed the memorial of a covenant confirmed by oath.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil, represented the powers in this system. The fruit of the last, as our Author says, with boughs of the first; branches of the palm-tree, and twigs of several other trees, were to be held in the hands of the children of Israel at the feast of tabernacles, their grand festivity for mirth and rejoicing: and he insists, that the carrying those several boughs and fruits had a religious emblematical meaning, then very well understood; as it was the only way, before writing, of communicating knowledge; and as intelligible, very near, as writing was afterwards. Because these emblems were then so fully understood, the meaning of them is not by Moses explained: but our Author

seems to think it possible still to decypher and explain them; only thus much he apprehends is plain from the reflection made, that the use of those several sorts of trees being prescribed, without any explication of the reason or purpose, these purposes must have been universally known at the time, and the trees themselves must have been constituted emblems, as early as the planting the first garden.

As hieroglyphicks, or emblems, were the first method of conveying and continuing knowledge, which was succeeded by the more perfect invention of writing; and as all religious service was originally performed in an emblematical way, which carried the mind from the emblem, type, or emblematical or typical act, to the person or thing represented; our Author thinks, that after writing was invented, for the more certain preservation of divine knowledge, the services were still continued, and performed in the old way, and types and emblems were of the same use and effect as ever; hence sacrifice, &c. were continued; and, at the same time that God described the powers of this system, as dependant upon himself, in writing, he caused the same sort of account of them to be represented, and hung up hieroglyphically in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple. The lamp in the temple, the pillars, and their ornaments before the porch, our Author insists, were an hieroglyphical description of the powers of this system, of the deities the Heathens adored, which Jehovah willed to be nailed up in the place of the residence of his presence, to bear in mind their inferiority and dependance on him; and that they were to be considered in no other view than as emblems of himself; and his servants.

As our Author, by this new and very surprising manner of interpretation, gives light to an infinite

number of institutions, prohibitions, declarations, claims and services; so, by accurately examining the force and propriety of the original language, and comparing it with the institutions and services, when rightly understood, he thinks he has made a world of very important discoveries.

Various are the guesses that have been made by learned men, concerning the sense and meaning of the word *Jehovah* the ineffable name of God, as the Jews call it. Our Author has fixed on that construction which makes it the essence existing, that essence or substance which has being in itself necessarily, without dependance upon any other, and in distinction to all other essence or substance whatever. *Jah* signifies the essence, by eminence; and (if I reach the Author's meaning, which seems to be wholly new and uncommon on this article) by the addition of the other word *Hovah*, signifying actual being with powers and faculties, gives an idea of that sufficient all-perfect Being, that has existence in itself, or by the necessity of its own nature exists. Something like to this, ingenious moderns have struck out by the light of nature, as they say, for the idea of the sovereign Being: and it will be no great reproach to their notion, if it falls in with the sentiment contained in the name given by God to himself in the scripture; nor a slight confirmation of the accuracy and perfection of the scripture, if, when it is fairly examined, it is found to express sentiments so just, so lofty, and so difficult, if at all possible, to be come at by the light of nature only.

El is another name, which the scripture gives to the Deity; it commonly is translated *the Strong*, or *powerful*, *fortis*. But our Author insists, that it signifies properly the *irradiator*; an idea borrowed from that irradiation or emission of light and influence

from the sun to move, support, and preserve in being and action every thing in this material system; from whence it is applied to the Deity, to express something of that inconceivable power, influence, and manner of acting, by which the Deity acts uncontrollably, where it is not locally present. As the Author from scripture avers the proper residence of God is without this system, so that, by this name, that irradiation, which, according to our Author's philosophy, is in a great measure the supporter of nature, is attributed to Jehovah; and such a power of irradiation in a spiritual sense, as we see performed by the sun in a material way, is ascribed to the invisible God.

To confirm this sentiment, and indeed a very considerable branch of our Author's scheme, he observes that the word *hallelu-jah*, which is the burden of almost all the psalms of praise and thanksgiving, the first word frequently and the last, and which is translated sometimes, *praise ye the Lord*, sometimes is transcribed, without translating, *hallelu-jah*, signifies properly and undoubtedly *irradiation to Jah*, or, *Ascribe ye irradiation to the Essence*. Now, if the utmost honour the believing Jews could express for their God, in their most devout and thankful praises, was to ascribe irradiation to his essence; it, on the one hand, renders our Author's opinion of the sense of *El* very probable; and, on the other hand, very strongly proves, that the scripture-ideas of the Deity, and of its powers and action, were borrowed from visible operations of the sun, the light, and air, and their actions in the heavens in all this material system.

There is still another name for God, the most commonly used of any in scripture, and on the true sense of which our Author builds a great deal; it is *Elohim*, always translated *Deus*, or God.

All the world, Jews and Christians, agree that this word is plural; seldom, not once in five hundred times, to be met with singular; almost always (a few instances excepted) joined with nouns and verbs in the singular number.

From this word, which the modern Jews, and, after them, Christians have translated *Deus*, in the singular number, when the true God is meant; but *Dii*, in the plural, when it is applied to the gods of the nations; several learned men have drawn arguments for the Trinity, and have taken it to be a full proof, at least, of the plurality of persons. But as these men did not assert, or undertake to prove, that the scriptures were wrote with perfect accuracy, and were forced to admit a great many things to be written that they could not strictly and philosophically justify; and as they pretended to fix no certain origin or sense for the word, from the meaning whereof their argument could be examined or justified, these opinions made no great way to induce men to think that the doctrine of the Trinity was founded in the Old Testament.

But, as our Author insists, that every word of the sacred book is written with the utmost accuracy, truth and perfection; if that proposition is made good, what he says of the word *Elohim*, for evidence of the plurality of persons in the Deity, must have great weight.

Notwithstanding an infinity of guesses made by those who pretended to be learned in the *Hebrew* language, none ever hit on any thing that carried a sense in the least degree, satisfactory; our Author has fixed on the word *elab*, an oath or adjuration, (so translated perpetually by the Jews, where ever it occurs in the scriptures, whether as verb or noun, except where it is intended to signify the Deity, and

then they take care to hide that meaning,) as the root from which it is derived; and affirms, that, by the genius of the language, *Elohim* signifies, in the plural, *adjuradores*, persons bound by oath or covenant: referring this name to that engagement which the divine persons are supposed to have entered into, for the preservation and salvation of man, called *the covenant*; and averring, that it is expressive of that relation in which that oath or covenant put God to man.

He insists, that as this was the original light, in which, after the fall, God was willing to be known to man, for his comfort, and for encouraging him in his duty, all the apostate Heathens, who relinquished the true *Elohim*, and resorted to their rivals the heavens for protection, retained, nevertheless, this comfortable appellation, applied it to the heavens, and, as they sacrificed with the utmost zeal and seriousness to them, looked upon them as their *Elohim*, all-powerful beings, in covenant with them, for their good here and hereafter, and expected certainly from their hands protection, and performance of their supposed covenants. Hence by innumerable places in scripture it appears, that they looked upon themselves as bound never to relinquish their *Elohim*; and verily believed that their *Elohim*, in their turn, were bound never to desert them.

It is remarkable, that, of the many names which the Deity has in scripture, this is the only one, which concerns the salvation of man, that the Heathens carried off with them to apply to their false gods: for whom they coined other additional, or distinguishing names, without number, according to their different humours, and the different powers and attributes of the heavens, for which they worshipped them; but still, with all these, they mixed the character or ap-

pellation of *Elohim*, as what expressed their connection with, and relation to them.

And if this term shall be allowed to mean persons bound by oath or covenant, then it will fit kings or governors, who were under such ties and engagements to the people; and to them it is sometimes applied in scripture.

At whatever time the Jews thought fit first to translate this word singular, it is certain the Heathens retained it in the plural sense; and the Jews, when translating that word applied to the Heathen gods, render it plural.

Our Author observes, that the word *Elohim* is generally joined with verbs and nouns in the singular number; yet sometimes the words joined with it, determine the sense so flatly to be plural, that, without impropriety, such as is no where to be met with in the sacred book, the persons, or things spoken of, must necessarily be plural.

In the consultation that is represented to have been had by the *Elohim*, for the formation of man, in the first of Genesis, *the Elohim said, Let us make man in our image, according to our similitudes.*

And, Gen. iii. 22. after man had eaten of the forbidden fruit, the *Elohim* says, *Behold, man is become like one of us.* The meaning of the expression, and in what sense man was become like one of the *Elohim*, our Author, on another occasion, endeavours to explain: but from these, and such-like flat declarations of more persons than one in the *Elohim*, he insists it is beyond doubt, that the word is intentionally used plural.

On this subject he makes great use of the representatives of the *Elohim*, the *shemim*, the names, the powers in the machine, the heavens, being plural; and those powers being, according to his apprehen-

sion, just three, fire, light, and spirit, or air: and if it is supposed, that these three powers support all the motions and actions in this machine, and that the machine was given for a representation of the Deity, its nature, manner of existence, powers and actions, by itself; it is very difficult to call in doubt our Author's conclusion, that the one substance of the heavens, acting in three conditions, or with distinct powers, is expressive of the one essence and personality of the *Elohim*.

And, indeed, to do our Author's argument justice, supposing the received opinion of a Trinity in the Deity were to be illustrated, or represented, by the similitude of any visible, or conceivable object; it must be confessed, that the wit of man has not hitherto suggested any thing so fit, to throw light upon that high mystery, as this supposed machine; if the Author can make it good, that nature is actually supported by the agency of matter in those three conditions of fire, light, and spirit, or air. The unity of the machine, the co-operation or joint action of all the three powers; light the issue of fire, and yet coëval with it, returning spirit or air to maintain the joint action, and by it every thing, is so exquisite a picture of what hitherto has been thought to surpass all imagination, that, if the Author can maintain that his machine works by these powers, very few will doubt of the truth of what it was intended to represent.

That the Deity, and the several persons in it, are, in numberless expressions of scripture, uniformly represented by the machine, and by these three powers in it, applying the idea of fire to the first, the idea of light to the second, and of air or spirit to the third, the Author endeavours to prove by a world of quotations.

He does not forget the frequent appearances of the Deity, in the form of fire, often attended with light, and air, or cloud: he takes notice of the many descriptions of the first person as terrible; a jealous God; the avenger of sin; a flaming, a consuming, a devouring fire to the workers of iniquity: and has collected a list of the various temples, that the Heathens had, to the sun, to fire, or to the heavens, under that head or attribute.

With respect to light, he produces numerous passages, where light, represented or spoken of, seems properly applicable to that person, who was to be the light of the nations, who was represented by irradiation; and, perhaps, praised or prayed for in the expression *hallelujah*; and who declared formally of himself, that he was the light.

And, on this subject, our Author has one very uncommon reflection, as almost all his are; he says the word *cohen*, translated *priest*, and to which no one has pretended to affix a determined meaning, signifies properly an *intercessor*; and, in evidence of this, he has produced several texts, and particularly two, where the children of David are said to be his *cobanim*, meaning intercessors with him, it not being possible they could be priests, since they were not of the tribe of Levi.

After establishing that the word rendered priest signifies intercessor, he proceeds to observe, that the high-priest was only such, and employed in offering sacrifice, as the representative of him, concerning whom Jehovah swore, that he was a priest, or intercessor for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.

And then, to make that type or representation more entire, our Author observes that the high-priest, in office, was to wear garments made by divine direction, emblematical in every particular of his office;

but more especially in that they were to be of white, that is linen, and gold, and purple, and scarlet; by that collection of colours expressing light, the badge or representation of the second person of the Deity.

This, as well as the crown that the priest wore, expressing irradiation, as before-mentioned, our Author thinks, was certainly understood at the time of the institution, and by believers, down till the days of our Saviour; and, had it been generally then understood, the nation would not have rejected the light. But, as the Jewish people, universally apostatized, lost their knowledge with their faith, and had the remains of it almost altogether extinguished in the captivity; they had leisure to frame notions of their Messiah, different from what the scriptures exhibited; and in the constructions of the scriptures, which they did not understand, they imposed on themselves, and on all that trusted them.

To the light, our Author shews, there were several temples amongst the Heathens.

Touching the third person, our Author produces several texts, where he is formally spoken of, under the description of *Ruach*, *Ventus*, *Flatus*, *Spiritus*, the Spirit of Jehovah. And from the Heathen's religion and opinions he observes, that they imputed all their advices, from their gods, to the spirit, to some material inspiration or inflation; all their sybils, the priestesses that delivered their oracles, were supposed, in effect, to be blown up, and inflated by some spirit or wind. And it may be considered, whether it is of any consequence and of what, that they delivered their answers from tripodes.

But, not to pursue, at any greater length, the numerous and the various authorities that our Author brings together to support his argument, it merits

reflection, that, when our Saviour speaks of himself, as the light; and when he and his Apostles deliver the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament; they speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, without any apology or explication, as a matter very well known and understood by such as understood the scriptures; a thing which it seems altogether impossible they could have fallen into, if they had not known, that such as really knew the scriptures, understood them; as our Saviour says, on other occasions, Matth. xi. 15. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

As our Author has pushed his argument for the Trinity very far, from the notion of fire, light, and spirit; so he lays great weight on another argument, not altogether unlike to that, drawn from the appearance of the cherubim, set up at the expulsion of Adam from paradise, and from the description of that representation or appearance, drawn from the first and tenth chapters of the prophecies of Ezekiel.

From the visions of Ezekiel he collects, that the form of the cherubim was one figure, with four heads or faces; the face of an ox, the face of a lion, the face of a man, and the face of an eagle.

Had there been no more joined but the faces of the ox, the lion, and the eagle, as the Author can prove that the ox represented fire, the lion light, and the eagle spirit or air, there could be no doubt, he says, that this would have been a proper representation of the trinity in the heavens; and, by consequence, of the invisible Trinity by them represented.

But, as the face of a man was added, joined, as the prophet takes notice, to the face of the lion, the representative of light, the Second Person, our Au-

thor insists, that this appearance exhibited to man, for his comfort, just when for his sin he was expelled paradise, and sentenced to hard labour, represented the Trinity, with the Man Christ Jesus joined to the Second Person; and was the most compleat emblematical representation of what our Author supposes God revealed to Adam, when he told him, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent.*

Again, this representation in the cherubim was a thing so well known and understood by the ancients, though we have no description of it but in Ezekiel's vision, that, when the Lord commanded it to be made for the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, the workmen made it at once, without wanting a pattern. And our Author lays no small weight on it, that figures of these cherubim (and he says he can shew why there were two of them) were, besides the ark of the testimony, and the mercy-seat, the only furniture of the most holy place; into which none but the representative of the Great Intercessor durst ever enter; and that but once a-year, clothed with the emblems of his office, and being sanctified by blood.

As our Author is indefatigably industrious in his search after the true meaning of emblems, institutions and services; he is no less so, in settling the meaning of words, hitherto mistaken or unknown. I shall give you but one instance.

The word *berith*, which we always translate *covenant*, *fædus*, occurs in several texts; and is generally coupled with such words as cannot suffer a man to believe that *covenant*, *fædus*, is its original signification.

The blood of the covenant, The messenger of the covenant, I have given thee for a covenant to the nations, &c. are expressions that will hardly go down; and

what we translate *making a covenant*, *karat berith*, most certainly signifies *to kill*, or *cut off*, *berith*; which shews to conviction that *berith* must, at least originally, have had another sense than is now in the translation given it.

Our Author, searching to be satisfied in this difficulty, finds two texts, where the very same letters that compose *berith*, but differently pointed by the Jews, is truly translated *soap* [*borith* as they point it] *fullonum*; and this word, again, confessedly derived from *barar*, which signifies *to cleanse*, *to purify*.

If then, says our Author, *berith* is taken from the idea of purifying, it must, and may, from the genius of the language, carry the sense of purifier, purification throughout.

And if it is so understood, then all the texts in which it occurs, will be intelligible, and determined to that important sense in which they were written.

I have given thee for a purifier to the nations, The blood of the purifier, The messenger of the purifier, will all directly refer to the Great Sacrifice, the purification, to which our divines, without observing the rules of construction, and by very hardy figures, apply them.

And *karat berith* will signify, in its proper and primary sense, to cut of a, or the purifier, and not to cut off a covenant.

Our Author affirms, that in the usage of the *Hebrew* tongue, nothing is more certain or frequent, than that the type or emblem gets and bears the name of the thing typified and represented, or principally meant; wherefore, if Christ was the purifier, the *berith* promised, every creature, whose blood was shed, as representing him, in sacrifice, might have had the name of *berith*; and, when such a crea-

ture was killed or cut off, as an emblem, it was true that *berith* was cut off or killed.

And as man, intering into covenant, that is, accepting of terms offered by God for his purification, in token of his acceptance, was to kill, and shed the blood of a type of the Great Purifier; which blood, though but of a lamb, the type, was deemed holy, and capable of sanctifying and purifying the altar, the tabernacle, the priest, and every thing that it touched; the same symbolical act was repeated for confirming pactions, covenants, or agreements, between men; a typical *berith* was cut off; and over sacrifice men confirmed covenants, and accepted of the terms proposed by each other, as they testified their engagements to God, and their faith that he was bound to them, by the same typical representation.

Nor will this construction appear strange to those who reflect, that in the *Latin* tongue, *percutere*, *icere*, and *ferire fœdus*, are the terms used for making a covenant or alliance: in respect to which, the etymologists satisfy themselves with saying, that slaying some animal in sacrifice, being a solemnity that attended all alliances; at the making whereof, the parties were willing to intimate, by the death of the victim, the punishment they thus consented to be bound to, if they violated the agreement; the words *ferire fœdus* were brought to be expressive of the end or purpose for which such animals were slain at treaties and alliances; and they suppose that *fœdus* may have been the ancient *Tuscan* word for *hœdus*, a kid.

But, if they will depart from suppositions without any proof, and mount a little higher in their antiquity; if they will admit, what our Author thinks he has proved, that all the religious services of the Heathens were taken from the institutions and ap-

pointments in the service of the living God; though, by length of time, change of language, and imaginations; when men, having lost true knowledge, began to imagine, they were misapplied, and, in part, altered: they will find reason to believe, that, even amongst the Heathens, sacrifice, as the highest and most important act of their religious worship, was adhibited to covenants, as an appeal to their deities; and putting all they expected, from that symbol of their religion, on the issue of their faithful performance of their engagements.

In the *Hebrew* language, the same word, *asbem*, signifies *sin*, and a *sin-offering*, a kid, lamb, or any other thing offered for sin; and the Heathens made it a name or attribute of one of their *Elohim*.

It does not appear, so far as I know, that *foedus*, in the ancient *Tuscan*, was written for *baedus*; but it does appear, that the *Latin* has an adjective of the same letters, *foedus*, -a, -um, which signifies *vile*, *unclean*, *abominable*, and *polluted*. Now, if with them at the first formation of their language, an offering for sin or pollution could be called sin or pollution, as in *Hebrew* a kid or lamb offered for *asbem* is called *asbem*; I see no reason to doubt, that every offering for sin or pollution might be called *foedus*, or *foedum*, in the sense of that word adjective; and that therefore, *ferire foedus*, in its proper and primitive sense, was, *to kill*, or *sacrifice*, a *sin-offering*.

But be this as it will, our Author discovers several temples, amongst the Heathens, to *berith* and to *Baal-berith*, by which he says is meant the Lord the Purifier, the early Heathens having by no means lost the idea, or the expectation of a purification.

And he says that salt, a necessary ingredient in all sacrifice, was adhibited and required in this view only, as an emblem of purification; salt being one of the most powerful purifiers known, and of approved use

in purging and purifying most sorts of metals from their earth, and base dross that closely adheres to them.

When Freethinkers object to the evidence drawn from prophecies and prophetic institutions, for supporting the Christian religion, That it is ambiguous and uncertain; the prophecies being dark and obscure, capable often of a double meaning; and the institutions being figurative and typical, applicable only, *ex post facto*, by a comparison of the figures with the events; and therefore not fit to communicate, with any certainty, to those to whom the revelation was made, the knowledge of the event, which they were to expect, and in which they were to believe: the common answer is, That we are not, from our narrow views, and with our dim lights, to examine and to find fault with the disposition of the infinitely wise Being, purely because we cannot assign reasons, that to us seem adequate, for the conduct he has been pleased to hold; that it has pleased God to convey such intimations of the then future advent of the Messiah to the Israelites, in the law, and by the prophets, as were, when the event prefigured happened, full and distinct proof that Jesus was the person intended; and the system of religion, delivered by him, the future law and faith to which all mankind was to be subject; and that these things being admitted, it is presumptuous to enquire why the Deity, in infinite wisdom, thought fit to convey this knowledge and these intimations in prophecies and institutions, which, at the beginning, and before the advent of our Saviour, were wrapt up designedly in mystery and figures. And some people even venture to guess at probable causes, for the delivering and keeping this knowledge in this manner, till after our Saviour's passion.

But, if our Author's scheme for interpreting the

scriptures is true, the whole objection falls at once to the ground; because these emblems and figures, as well as many expressions called figurative, though dark, obscure, and uncertain, to us, (who have lost the knowledge of the language, as well as of the emblems,) yet were not so to them, to whom the revelation was made; and who, by those emblems, and by that language, understood as clearly what was foretold to happen, at the distance of many centuries, and therefore as distinctly believed in it; as we, at the distance of so many ages after the event, upon the relation in a language we understand, know and believe that Jesus actually came, and fulfilled the will of God, and the predictions concerning him.

And, if this be so, it will be easily understood, why the faith of Abraham, and others who preceeded the days of our Saviour, is so highly commended by St. Paul.

If the Israelites, to whom the law was delivered, understood the language, the institutions, the emblems, as our Author does, they certainly must have known that, in due time, God intended to send a Messiah to the world, under the suffering character that Jesus bore; and they must have believed it would be so, because of the marks of divinity attending the revelation, which they were eye-witnesses to. The language, in which we are told of that event after it happened, is no more precise and distinct than that formerly used, was to them; and, if we have not seen the miracles with our own eyes, we see those prophecies delivered to them, and have authentic records of the completion of them; which does no more than put us on a level with them, in point of evidence, or cause of belief.

They, indeed, at the publication of the law, could not tell (so far as we see) how many ages, or years,

the event was distant; as we, who have come after it, can. But, when the advent became nearer, and when the impression of the first revelation became fainter, in the days of Daniel, they were brought more upon a level with us, even in that respect; and were told, to a day, when they were to look for the completion of their hopes.

It is not to be denied that this revelation, however clear in itself, became obscure, before the coming of the Messiah: the means, by which this was brought about, our Author has explained: and very noble ends may be assigned, for which it may have been permitted to be so, by the divine wisdom and goodness; without impeaching the certainty of the proof of the Christian religion from prophecies and prophetic institutions; and without suffering the divine goodness to lie under the imputation that would attend the supposition, that the revelation of God was not full, and complete to mankind, and did not instruct them sufficiently for their conduct, their faith, and their comfort.

I have selected these few hints from amidst an infinity of other very various observations and discoveries, which the Author has, without seeming very solicitous about what is called method or order, brought together. And I have ranged them in such order, as seemed to me the most proper to let you easily into the Author's sentiments, so far as I understand them.

If YOUR LORDSHIP will judge of them fairly, and after due examination, you must enquire after them in the original; where you will find many proofs and arguments, that my measure of searching does not sufficiently come up to, employed for illustrating each particular, besides what I have cursorily stated in these pages.

I have lost my labour, if YOUR LORDSHIP does not think these matters highly worth looking into; and, from your learning and candor, I promise myself that, if you do, those, who are in the same low rank of learning with me, will have great obligations to you for letting them know how they are to form their judgment upon matters that seem to concern them and mankind so much.

In the treatise, last published, *of power essential and mechanical*, our Author, amongst other very curious and surprising things, undertakes to confute Sir I—— N——'s principles of gravity, attraction, infinite vacuity, and projection, which, he says, are not only unmechanical, but contradictory to the nature and idea of material substance, and impossible and absurd. And he pretends to prove, by different editions of Sir I——'s works, and from different passages in them, that he has at different times varied and changed his own opinions; and, in effect, as our Author calls it, given up his own principles, which are untenible. In this last treatise our Author mixes, with his reflections against Sir I—— and the late Dr. C——, a degree of bitterness and severity that must be disagreeable to many, and which nothing can excuse, but a zeal for the honour of religion, which in him seems to be very strong and sincere.

I am,

MY LORD,

YOUR LORDSHIP'S

Most Obedient,

Humble Servant.





